



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 319.

Price, Five Cents.

NICK CARTER AND THE MURDERESS

OR
TRACKED BY A TRAIL
OF BLOOD



BY THE AUTHOR OF
"NICK CARTER"

ONE OF THE ROBBERS STOOD UP. PATSY FIRED AS HE RAN, AND THE MAN REELED, THREW UP BOTH HANDS, AND FELL OVER INTO THE ROAD.



NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1903, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 319.

NEW YORK, February 7, 1903.

Price Five Cents.

NICK CARTER AND THE MURDERESS;

OR,

Tracked by a Trail of Blood.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A SUDDEN CHANGE OF PLAN.

"Now for the diamond star."

It was Nick Carter who spoke.

The great detective sat in his library and before him were Ida Jones and Patsy.

Ida, who had worked hard and late on a case the day before, had just come in from breakfast.

Patsy had already been down to headquarters to give some information about a prisoner there, and Nick himself had been busy since an early hour in a way that he soon explained.

Chick was engaged in a case that had nothing to do with the matter that Nick referred to when he spoke of the diamond star.

"All right," Patsy responded in his usual humor-

ous way; "we'll go right out now and pick it up in the street."

The article mentioned was a jewel of great value that had been stolen from the house of Mr. Leslie Gordon, on Madison Avenue early the morning before.

Several crooks were mixed up in the affair. The Carters had captured all but one of them and had recovered all the stolen property except the diamond star.

That was supposed to be in the possession of Kate Kramer, the one member of the gang who had escaped.

Another woman of the same name, supposed to be Miss Kate Kramer's mother, had been caught by Ida in Greenwich, Connecticut. Mrs. Kramer had refused to leave the State without extradition papers.

and the detective had been obliged to leave her in Greenwich until these could be obtained.

Nick did not answer Patsy's remark, but said:

"I have been to headquarters this morning and had a man sent to Albany to get the extradition papers for Mrs. Kramer.

"So we don't need to think of her for a day or two.

"Kate Kramer may be in the city now, though I doubt it. She may also try to pawn the diamond star, but I doubt that still more. I think she wants that gem for herself.

"But to make perfectly sure, I have had a warning sent to all pawnbrokers to be on the lookout for such an article and to notify me the instant any is offered for a loan.

"And, of course, I have had the police send an alarm to all stations to look out for Kate Kramer.

"The question now is, what shall we do to find her?"

"She may go to the house where she lived," Ida suggested.

"That is what she would want to do," Nick responded, "but I think she will be too shrewd to do so."

"She might send a pal," said Patsy.

"If she has one," added Ida.

Nick nodded.

"You are both on the right track," he said. "A careful watch must be kept on that house. The girl is very clever and may try to visit the place in disguise."

Nick then went on to tell them his plan for capturing Kate Kramer and recovering the diamond star.

He had not finished when a telegram was brought to him.

After reading it he looked thoughtful and passed it without a word to Patsy and Ida.

The message read:

"Kramer woman murdered matron killed railway train coming to city."

It was dated Greenwich and signed Dempsey.

"What the deuce does that mean?" asked Patsy. "Who's Dempsey?"

"To answer your second question first," replied Nick, "Dempsey is the police officer in Greenwich who

took charge of Mrs. Kramer after Ida had arrested her."

"But the rest of the message?" Dempsey managed to get what he had to say in ten words, and the result is that I can't be sure what he's driving at."

Nick looked again at the message.

"You see," said Patsy, reading over his shoulder, "it may mean, 'The Kramer woman is murdered. The matron was killed by a railway train on the way to New York,' or," and Patsy laughed, "it may mean that the matron killed a railway train."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Ida. "I think the message is clear enough. Mrs. Kramer has escaped, that's certain. She murdered the matron and was killed herself on the way to the city. Isn't that it, Nick?"

"Pretty near it, I think," Nick answered. "That about the train isn't so clear. I believe it means that Dempsey is on the way to see us."

He looked at the message once more.

"Ah!" he said, "this was sent two hours ago nearly. There has been some delay in getting it here. Well, we'll wait a bit. If Dempsey is coming he will be along soon."

Even as he spoke there was a ring at the front bell and a servant came to say that a Mr. Dempsey wanted to see Mr. Carter.

"Show him up," said Nick.

When the Greenwich policeman came in Nick told him that he was only a minute behind his telegram.

"I am not surprised," said Dempsey. "I filed the message just as I was leaving the village, and the operator said that there were a good many telegrams that were ahead of it."

"No harm done," Nick remarked.

"I'm glad of that. I wanted to notify you early for I thought one of you might think of going up to Greenwich, and that would be waste time now. I came myself because I thought you ought to know the details."

"Thank you. I want to know them very much."

Dempsey then told his story. Without putting it in his own words it was as follows:

Mrs. Kramer had been arrested by Ida late in the

evening. The prisoner was taken to the lock-up and Ida stayed there until she had been searched.

When the village officers went to lock the prisoner up they found—what they had forgotten to mention to the New York detective—that they had no room for the prisoner.

The village lock-up was a small affair with only two cells, and the place was so quiet that often weeks passed without either of the cells being occupied.

On this night, however, it happened that a party of noisy drunks had been taken in.

They were sleeping off their jags in the cells, and the officers had to find some other place to put Mrs. Kramer.

The only place they could think of was the town poor farm, and they took the prisoner out there.

Mrs. Kramer had made a violent struggle at the time of her arrest, but she had been very quiet since, and the village officers thought she would give no trouble.

The long and short of it was that the matron at the poor farm agreed to take charge of her through the night if the officers would handcuff the prisoner.

This was done, and they left. The matron locked Mrs. Kramer in a chamber and decided to sit up all night at the door so as to be sure that the prisoner did not escape.

Just what happened Dempsey did not know, but he had heard some of the inmates of the poor house say that they were awakened in the night by a rapping on the door of the prisoner's room.

They heard the matron speak to her and heard Mrs. Kramer complain of feeling ill.

After that the matron went downstairs to get medicine and returned a moment later.

They heard voices in the prisoner's room, so that it was evident that the matron and Mrs. Kramer had some kind of conversation, and after that nobody heard anything.

Early in the morning a servant passed the prisoner's room and saw that the door was open.

It was not yet sunrise.

The servant looked in and saw the matron lying on the floor, dead.

At first sight it looked as if there had been a furious struggle.

The matron's head lay in a pool of blood, and there were bloody marks on the wall and furniture.

Later it proved that the matron had been choked to death.

"I suppose," said Dempsey, slowly, and with a glance at Ida, "that the prisoner cut the matron's throat after strangling her. It wasn't a pretty sight, and it doesn't make a nice story."

"Don't mind me, Mr. Dempsey," responded Ida. "I learned long ago not to mind such things. You must give every detail just as if no woman was present."

He went on to tell of the search that was made as soon as the news had been telephoned to the village.

A number of men took part in it.

They found it unexpectedly easy to trace the course the prisoner took, for she seemed to leave marks of blood wherever she went.

There was a stain on the wall of the hallway near her room, and another on the stair banister.

A dark red spot on the knob of the back door showed how she left the building.

The men scattered over the poor farm yard and soon one found a blood stain on a fence.

Evidently the escaping prisoner had climbed the fence here to get to the road.

It looked probable, also, that she had started toward the village, and after some further search along the road another blood stain was found on a stretch of bare rock.

"Mrs. Kramer," Nick remarked at this point, "must have been wounded in the struggle."

"Probably," responded Dempsey, "and we expect to know just how when we find her body."

He proceeded to tell how the searchers followed the general direction indicated by the trail of blood until they came to the railroad.

There they discovered not only fresh marks of blood, but further information of importance.

Workmen on the railroad told how the early morning Boston express had run into and killed a woman on a bridge that crossed a tide-water stream not a great distance east of the Greenwich station.

The woman was crossing the bridge at the time and the engineer had not seen her until the train was close upon her.

It was evident that she made a great effort to get out of the way.

"It looked," the engineer had reported, "as if she tried to drop between the ties of the tressel. She disappeared and the train went on without any shock that I could notice, but there's no doubt she was hit."

Of course, there was no certainty that the woman run over was Mrs. Kramer—that is, not at first.

The engineer could not describe her, and he was the only one who had seen her at all.

The train had been stopped and run back to the bridge.

A search made at that time revealed no trace of the unfortunate woman.

It was supposed that her body had fallen into the water and that it had been carried away by the tide, which was running out rapidly.

So the trainmen reported what they knew at the station and the train went on.

When the party that was hunting for Mrs. Kramer heard this story, they asked if the railroad men had found the body."

No, the railroad men had not looked for it.

The searchers looked for themselves.

They did not find the body, but about a quarter of a mile below the bridge they did find a woman's hat.

It was lying on land that was dry at the time, but that would have been covered by water at the time the train passed.

The hat, though soaked, was evidently new, but there was no way to identify it as Mrs. Kramer's until Dempsey remembered something.

"I thought from the looks of it," he said, "that it was the hat she wore when Miss Jones arrested her, but I have no eye for women's dress and so couldn't be sure.

"Then I remembered that Miss Jones had told me how she followed the prisoner from New York, and that Mrs. Kramer, who left New York bareheaded, had bought a hat in Portchester."

"I went over to Portchester and took the hat with me.

"The stores were only beginning to open up for the day, but I found a clerk just taking down the shutters from a milliner's on Main Street.

"Ever see this hat before?" I asked him."

"Jimminy!" said he, "I should say so. Why! I sold that hat to a woman who came in here bareheaded last night just as I was shutting up, and here it is again just as I am opening. And there was another woman came along last night asking about that hat, and I told her'——"

Here Dempsey stopped, for Ida was laughing.

"That clerk," she explained, "would have kept me all night with his talk if I had let him."

"Well," responded Dempsey, "he didn't keep me long. I let him say that he had told you the way to a livery stable, and then I broke away from him. He was still talking when I left.

"What he said about the hat, of course, settled it.

"The woman run into by the train was Mrs. Kramer."

"Has her body been found yet?" asked Nick.

"It hadn't been when I left, but men are searching for it. We think it likely that it will float back with the tide."

"Possibly."

Dempsey had told all he knew, and when he found that Nick had no more questions to ask he took his leave.

"We've got to change our plans," said Nick then.

CHAPTER II.

A FARMER IN TROUBLE.

"Do you think Mrs. Kramer was not killed by the train, Nick?" asked Ida.

"Do you think I'll take it for granted?" he retorted. "The woman who, in spite of being handcuffed, mur-

dered her guard and got away, might manage to keep out of the way of a railroad train."

"I wonder how she got rid of her handcuffs?" mused Patsy.

"Perhaps she didn't get rid of them," said Nick. "Anyhow we mustn't rest until we're satisfied that she was really killed by the train."

There was a little further talk about the case, and then Ida and Patsy started for Greenwich.

They went down to the tide-water stream and found a number of men searching for the woman's body, and a number of idlers looking on.

No trace of her had been found except the hat.

The tide was coming in rapidly, and most of the men were gathered at a spot where it was believed the body would be washed up.

"You see," said one of them, "a man was drowned off this bridge a dozen years ago. His body went out with the tide, but it came back on the next one and landed here."

"You can see, too," remarked another, "that all sorts of drift stuff comes ashore here."

This was some three hundred yards below the bridge.

Of course, the detectives did not say who they were.

The men supposed they were drawn there by curiosity.

"We'll keep them thinking so, Ida," said Patsy. "You hang around near the crowd a while. I'm going to investigate the bridge itself."

He went some distance beyond the bridge to a boathouse he had noticed when they arrived.

There he hired a boat and rowed back to the bridge.

At high tide it would have been necessary for a man in a boat to bend over in order to pass under, for the rails were not more than three feet above the surface.

With the tide half in, it was possible for Patsy to touch the under side of the ties when he stood up in the boat.

Beginning at the west end, he worked his boat across the stream by standing up and pulling at one tie after another.

While he was doing this a train came along.

Patsy caught a tie with both hands and pulled himself up two or three inches, taking care that his feet should barely touch the gunwale of the boat so that it would not float away.

He held himself thus while the train thundered above him.

"Good experiment," he muttered, dropping back to the boat after the train had passed. "That sort of thing shakes a fellow pretty lively, but it's easy enough to hang on."

When he had crossed to the end and looked around a little, he rowed the boat back to the house and rejoined Ida.

"These chumps will never find her body," said he, in a low tone.

"So?"

"She wasn't knocked off the bridge."

"I'm not surprised, but——"

"How do I know?"

"Exactly."

"Well, in the first place, the trail of blood is there."

"Indeed!"

"On the under side of the bridge."

"Are you sure it was blood?"

"It might be red paint, I suppose."

Patsy grinned.

"You don't suppose anything of the kind," said Ida. "Go on."

"The best of it is," he continued, "that her finger marks are plain. I could see where she grasped the ties."

"Then that settles it."

"Perhaps so, but do you think you could hang by your fingers from one of those ties while a train was passing?"

"I don't know. Never tried such a thing."

"I did, and I know you could do it."

"And that is what Mrs. Kramer did?"

"To a dead certainty. I think she planned to fool the engineer. I'll bet that she wasn't in the way of the train at all, but stood at one side where she could

drop on the instant when it seemed as if she was going to be run down."

"I had thought of something like that. The engineer would be so startled at seeing her suddenly that he would not be able to tell whether she was directly in front or not."

"That was the scheme, I think."

"But she might have been shaken off into the water. The bridge must tremble fearfully——"

"It does, and it rattles the nerves, but she could hold on. And suppose she was shaken off; it doesn't follow that she was drowned."

"No; she may be able to swim."

"But she didn't have to swim."

"No?"

"She worked her way from the point where she dropped out of sight to the east end of the bridge, and there crawled from under on dry land."

"You're sure of that?"

"I followed her bloody finger marks all the way."

"She must have been severely wounded."

"Not necessarily. A scratch or two on her fingers would account for all the blood that has been seen. And it's clear that she didn't lose enough blood to make her weak."

"That's so. Well, what next, Patsy?"

"You know as well as I, Ida. We've got to follow the trail of blood and see where it lands us."

They left the men waiting for the tide to bring in the body and went to the bridge, which they crossed to the east end.

"I presume," Patsy remarked, "that she dropped her hat overboard as a blind."

"Then that should make it so much the easier for us to trace her," responded Ida. "I got her before, you know, because she was traveling bare headed."

The detectives did not spend much time at the end of the bridge, for there was only one way which the woman could have taken.

That was along the railroad tracks.

Not far away, however, there was a deep cut over which ran a wagon road.

Both looked up at the bridge when they came under it, and then they turned to each other.

There was no need of discussion.

"I'll look on this side," said Patsy, "and you on the other."

They went back a few rods to a point near the beginning of the cut.

Then they searched the rocks, especially in places where it was easy to climb up.

Presently Ida called:

"Here it is."

Patsy went over to her side.

She pointed silently at a dark stain on a rock that jutted a little from the ledge.

"Finger marks again," said Patsy. "This is where she climbed up. Come on."

He helped Ida to the top. They looked for anything to show which direction Mrs. Kramer had taken.

They found none, but it seemed most likely that she went on east, as to go in the other direction would have brought her back to Greenwich.

For some distance after that nothing attracted their attention. Then they came to a place where the road branched.

"Guesswork here," said Patsy, doubtfully.

"We'd better divide," was Ida's advice, and that they did.

She took the road to the right and he the one to the left, and they agreed upon a meeting place in the next town as well as a way to keep each other informed by telegraph if anything important occurred.

Patsy walked rapidly, keeping his eyes open at every step for telltale stains.

He came to a cross-roads, where there was a store and two or three houses, and he asked a few questions there.

Nobody had seen a woman without a hat. In fact, no stranger of any kind had been noticed by the people round there.

The detective went on. A mile or so from the cross-roads he came to a curve beyond which his road went through woods for some distance.

About halfway through the woods there was a farmer's wagon going in the same direction he was taking.

It was apparently not heavily loaded. A couple of barrels were all the freight that could be seen at the distance.

The driver sat with his head down, his elbows on his knees, and the horse was plodding slowly.

Patsy had no sooner seen as much as this than there was a sudden change in the scene.

Five men leaped from the roadside and attacked the farmer.

One caught the horse by the bridle and stopped him.

The other four climbed into the wagon, two from behind, two at the front.

The farmer straightened up quickly and tried to beat them off with his whip.

One tumbled back and fell on his hands and knees, but he was up again in an instant.

Meantime the others had kept on. The farmer was caught around his neck and yanked backward.

Both barrels tipped over, spilling their contents, squashes and cabbages, upon the ground.

The farmer did not give in easily. He kept up a furious fight and gave his enemies all they wanted to do.

It need not be said that Patsy hurried to the farmer's aid.

He saw what has been described while he was on the run.

The attack was not more than begun before the young detective was dashing along the road at top speed.

As he ran he thought of firing his revolver to frighten the rascals who had made the attack, but he waited because he thought he could be more useful if he could take a hand in the fight.

"If they run away," he thought, "they may be able to take the farmer's money with them."

But when he had gone about halfway he saw that the farmer was overpowered.

The rascals had him on his back in the wagon and

three of them were holding him down and apparently going through his pockets.

One stood up for a second.

That was enough for the detective.

He fired as he ran.

The man threw up both hands, reeled and fell over into the road.

Immediately the others looked around.

He who held the horse let go and dashed away among the trees.

The others seemed to hesitate for a moment, as if they had lost their heads.

Then they began to climb out of the wagon.

"Halt there!" shouted Patsy. "I'll shoot any man who runs!"

One of the fellows seemed to fear capture more than he did a bullet.

He leaped from the wagon in spite of the warning and started into the woods.

The detective kept his word.

Crack! went his revolver, and the man stopped running, put his right hand to his left elbow and went to jumping around in a circle while he howled loudly.

"Hit you on the crazy bone, didn't I?" yelled Patsy.

He was still on the run and was now close to the wagon.

The other two had got to the ground, but they weren't doing anything.

They had plenty of respect for the detective's weapon.

"Hands up and keep 'em there!" ordered Patsy, as he came to the wagon.

The men obeyed instantly.

"As for you," said Patsy, to the man who had been hit in the elbow, "you can keep on the move as long as you go in a circle, but don't you dare try to get out of my sight."

Meantime the farmer had got up from the bottom of the wagon.

He was now seated with his back to the seat, looking in the most astonished way from his enemies to Patsy and back again.

"Gosh t'almighty!" he said, slowly.

Then he remembered something and put his hand to an inside pocket in a hurry.

"Jimminy!" he added, "they putty dum nigh got my wallet, didn't they?"

He drew out a large leather pocketbook, looked at it, then glanced at the men and hastily put it back.

"I fit for it as well as I knowed how," he said.

"You fit well, mister," responded Patsy, who wanted to laugh.

He was out of breath and was glad the ruffians wanted no more fighting.

The man who was dancing around stood still now and the detective kept all three covered with his revolver.

"You've got some rope in the wagon, I suppose," said Patsy.

"Uh, huh," replied the farmer, reaching for it.

"Then get down and tie these fellows."

The farmer did as he was told, and in a minute the two who were not wounded were made fast with their hands behind their backs.

The wounded man was ordered into the wagon, where his feet were tied together.

Patsy then looked at the man who had been shot first.

It proved that he had a bad but not dangerous wound in the shoulder.

He was quiet enough, and the detective lifted him into the wagon and let him lie down.

"Got room for your freight?" asked Patsy.

The farmer was scratching his head and looking on.

"By gum!" said he, "I'm glad my wife lost her hat!"

CHAPTER III.

WHAT MYSTIFIED THE FARMER.

"What the mischief does that mean?" thought Patsy.

He said nothing at the moment, but helped the farmer pick up the scattered squashes and cabbages and put them back in the barrels.

Altogether the barrels and the captured ruffians made a pretty big load, but the wagon stood it and the horse was equal to drawing it.

"Say!" exclaimed the farmer, suddenly, "dummed 'f I didn't forgit to thank ye. I'm right smart obleeged to ye, though."

"Don't mention it," responded Patsy. "What are you going to do with these fellows?"

"Blamed if I know! you've put 'em aboard."

"Where were you going?"

"I was going to Stamford to sell my garden stuff and put some money in the bank. You see, I sold a lot yistidy——"

The farmer stopped abruptly and felt of the pocket where he had stowed his wallet.

"You may have more trouble with that if you don't look sharp," said Patsy.

"Wal, what can I do about it?"

"Let me ride with you."

"Suttinly. I s'posed you would."

"We'll go to Stamford together and lock these men up."

"All right, sir. Climb on."

Patsy got up to the seat with him. He kept his revolver ready for instant use and the prisoners saw it.

"Sorry the other fellow got away," he said.

"Was there any more?" asked the farmer, looking around. "Why, so there was! There was five of 'em."

"The one who held the horse got away before I could shoot him."

"Darn him! I knowed him, too."

"So?"

"Yep. Geddup, Nancy. He's a no-good son of a neighbor of mine. I always said he w'an't no better'n he should be."

"Do you know these others?"

"Nope. Jim Springer, that's the name of the fellow who got away, he prob'ly hired 'em to help."

"Probably."

"You see, mister," and the farmer lowered his voice, "I sold a piece of land yistidy and the money was paid down about evening. It was too late to take it to the bank. Jim he heard of it, I s'pose, and planned to rob me. That's what I guess."

"It's a good guess."

"They'd have done it, too, if you hadn't come along."

"I guess they would. Will you have Jim arrested?"

"By gum! I will, soon as I git back."

"That's right, and before I leave you I'll give you my address so that you can call me as a witness if you need me."

"Thankee, mister."

"What made you say you were glad your wife lost her hat?"

"'Cause she was coming to Stamford with me. If she'd been along it would have scairt her to death to

be in such a ruction. When she found her best hat was missing she jest wouldn't come. Not but what she had another, but 'twas an old one. You know how women folks is, I guess. If she couldn't wear that new hat of hern she wouldn't go, and she wouldn't. Geddup."

"How did she happen to lose it?"

"Dummed if I know. Stolen, likely, but there wan't anything else missing."

"Better tell me all you can about it."

"Don't know any more, mister. I'd jus' as lief tell you all I do know, but——"

"I was thinking I might be able to find the hat for you."

"Go 'long! you don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do."

"Wal, I guess you could do most anything. You're mighty handy with that little gun, ain't you?"

"I've had some practice."

"Huh! I sh'd hate to be your targit. But about my wife's hat. She bought it in Stamford and paid five dollars fer it. That's a dum sight more'n I'd pay for such a thing, but you know how women folks is. Be you married?"

"No," and Patsy coughed to keep from laughing.

"Thought likely not. She brought the hat home only a month ago and hadn't worn it yit 'cept to church."

"Tell me where you live," suggested the detective. "Is it in Greenwich?"

"Nope. Did you notice a cross-roads store back here a piece?"

"Yes. I passed it."

"Like enough. Did you come straight to it by this road?"

"I did."

"Then p'r'aps you noticed away back there a place where the road branched. One branch followed the shore line putty close, and the other was this one."

The place described was the one where Patsy had parted from Ida.

"Yes," said the detective, "I remember that place."

"Wal, if you was to go along the other branch instead of this one you'd come to my place in about a quarter of a mile."

"Indeed!"

"That's it, mister. Geddup, Nancy. Mebbe you're wondering why I come by this road 'stid of the other when I go to Stamford?"

"I was thinking of that. Seems as if you took the longest way."

"Nope. They're both about the same distance, but this one is more level. That's why. Besides, I wanted to stop at the store you seen for a minute."

"I understand. And the hat was stolen from your house on the other road?"

"I didn't say 'twas stolen, mister, but I think likely 'twas. Ain't any other way to account fer it."

"When did your wife miss it? Last evening?"

"Wrong, mister. 'Twas this morning before breakfast."

"When did she see it last?"

"'Bout half an hour before sunrise."

"Indeed! she was up early."

"You bet! we have to get up early out here in the country, specially when there's a journey like this to be took. You see, my wife meant to go with me and she got up earlier than usual so's to git the work done up 'fore she went."

"I see."

"Fust thing she did, as she told me afterward, she got her hat outen the clothespress and took it down to the kitchen entry so's to have it handy as soon as we was ready to start. She hurg it on a peg there."

"And then went about the work?"

"Right, mister."

"What did she do first?"

"Lit the fire, sot the kittle on and then went out to the barn to help in the milking."

"Ah!"

"That was when 'twas done, I s'pose."

"You mean that when she got back she saw that the hat was gone?"

"Nope. It wa'n't till half an hour later that she missed it. Didn't look when she fust come in, you see. Jest went about her work without thinking of the hat, and bimeby she went into the kitchen entry to git a broom, and then she saw."

"It was gone, eh?"

"Clean gone, and not another dummed thing teched."

"Strange."

"Wal I ruther guess. Most myster'ous thing 't ever happened, so fur as I know. My wife she was dreadful worked up about it, and I don't blame her."

"Nor I."

"I'll tell her so. Now, did you ever hear of anything so dum strange?"

Patsy thought he had, but he didn't say so. He could think of a hundred cases in his experience that had been much stranger, but it was easy to see how the disappearance of the hat in the early morning would puzzle the simple farmer and his wife.

Moreover it was not at all strange to the detective, for he was quite sure he knew what had become of the hat.

"Ida's on the right road," he reflected. "I wish she might get onto these facts."

He would have liked to leave the farmer and go back to find Ida, but he judged that that would be impossible.

Besides, it was now his duty to see that the ruffians in the wagon were locked up.

So he stayed on the wagon, and in the course of an hour more it arrived in Stamford.

The prisoners were taken to the town lock-up and charges were made against them.

The two who were wounded were sent to a hospital and the others were put behind the bars.

Patsy then bade the farmer good-by, with a promise to look for the hat, and went to the place where he and Ida had agreed to meet.

She was not there, but he found a note from her. It said that she had struck a clew that led to Bridgeport, and she named a place there where he could find her.

CHAPTER IV.

IDA MEETS A STRANGE WOMAN.

"I wonder," Patsy thought, as he tore up the note, "if Ida struck the hat clew?"

That was it.

Just as Patsy did, she looked everywhere as she went along for a dark stain.

She had little hope of finding any, for, she thought, "if I had been in Mrs. Kramer's place, I would have stopped the blood from flowing somehow."

Another reason why she did not expect to find any further trace of the criminal was the fact that here she had been on an easy road—if she came that way—and therefore would not have had to touch anything as she did when she climbed out of the cut or along under the railroad bridge.

But Ida had not gone far when she came to a farmhouse close to the road with a freshly whitewashed fence in front of it.

Her keen eyes quickly discerned a dark spot on the white gate post and she went up to it.

It was the clew she wanted—there could be no mistake about that.

Finger marks in dark red!

"What was she doing here?" Ida asked herself; "and why was she so careless? Couldn't she see that blood was dripping from her fingers?"

Then Ida remembered that Mrs. Kramer had escaped in the night, and it was quite likely that she had come as far as this before it was light enough to see anything clearly.

She remembered also that a slight cut often gives little pain, and it was quite possible that the woman did not know that she was bleeding.

While she was standing at the gate and thinking a woman came to the door of the house, looked suspiciously at her and demanded to know what she wanted.

"I'll tell you," replied Ida, quickly. "I want to find a woman without any hat."

"Without any hat!" cried the other; "then look at me!"

Ida smiled.

"But you don't need any," she said. "You are at work——"

"Don't need any!" echoed the woman, angrily. "I'd like to know! Wasn't I going to Stamford with my husband this morning, and didn't I have to stay at home because my hat was gone?"

"Indeed! that's strange."

"I should say 'twas. What do you mean anyhow by coming along here and asking about a woman without any hat?"

"I want to find a bad woman," Ida answered slowly, so that the other would be sure to understand, "who had lost her hat. She would be quite likely to take yours if you left it where she could get it."

"Wal I vum!" exclaimed the woman.

She came from the door and down to the gate.

"I left mine right in that entry there," she went on, pointing back, "when I went out to milk the cows before sunrise. When I got back my hat was gone."

It needs no saying that Ida let the woman talk freely. She told the same story that Patsy had learned from the farmer.

"What time was it when you went out to milk the cows?" asked Ida.

"Just about quarter past five," said the woman.

"That fits," thought the detective. "The Boston express was due to pass Greenwich a little before five, and Mrs. Kramer had just about time enough by rapid walking to get here at quarter past. Of course she hurried."

"It's the strangest thing," said the woman, "that ever happened. New hat, too. I was dreadful disappointed. My man, he sold a lot yistidy, but we didn't neither of us think 'twould be right to use any of the money to buy another hat so soon after buying the other one."

"Never mind," Ida responded, "I think I can find your hat."

"So? Round here?"

"No, but before the day is over. I'm hunting for that woman, you know, and if I get her I'll send your hat back."

"I should be ever so much obliged, ma'am."

"Where is the nearest railroad station?"

The woman told her and Ida went on.

It was a mile or so further to the station, a small place where few trains stopped.

Ida asked the agent about early morning trains and found that there was none stopping at that station before half-past six.

"Mrs. Kramer," she thought, "would not wait so long as that here. She must have gone on."

Nevertheless the detective described Mrs. Kramer to the agent and asked him if any such person had been seen at the station during the morning.

None had. While they were talking a train came in bound east.

With a sudden thought Ida got aboard. She had no ticket, but paid her fare to Stamford, the nearest large town.

"Mrs. Kramer," she thought, "could walk as far as that and then ride if she had the price."

It proved that Ida had shown good judgment.

She described Mrs. Kramer to the ticket agent at Stamford and learned that a woman answering to that description bought a ticket for Bridgeport a minute or so after the station opened for business in the morning.

"She had her hand done up in a handkerchief," the agent added, "and, in fact, kept both hands out of sight."

"How did she handle her money, then?" asked Ida.

"Well, she pushed the money onto the window shelf and scraped the ticket away as if her arm was so paralyzed that she could hardly stir it."

"Could you see her arm at all?"

"No. She had a shawl over her shoulders and it covered both arms."

Ida wondered a little about this, but it seemed so certain that the woman was Mrs. Kramer that she went to the place where she had agreed to meet Patsy and left the note for him that has been referred to.

Then she took the next train for Bridgeport.

As it happened, Patsy almost caught the same train.

After getting her note he made a bee line for the railroad station and got there just in time to see the train disappearing in the distance.

The first thing for Ida to do after arriving at Bridgeport was to find whether Mrs. Kramer had come to that city.

She went to the station master and told him on the quiet who she was.

"I am after a woman," she said, "who probably came in on the 7.30 train from the west this morning."

"Can you describe her?"

Ida did so.

"I didn't go out to the platform for that train," said the station master, "but I'll find some of the men who were there at the time. Come with me."

They went to the baggage-room and talked with the men employed there. None of them could remember a woman who kept both hands under a shawl.

"You see," said one, "that train is a local and doesn't often bring any baggage. It didn't this morning, so we didn't have anything to do with it."

"Say!" exclaimed one of the others, "the conductor of that train is here now."

"So? where?" asked the station master.

"Oh, somewhere around here. He's not the regular conductor, you know. The regular man is sick. The sub. will take the 2.30 local back this afternoon."

"We'll look for him."

After some minutes' search they found the conductor.

"Yes," he said at once, "I brought a woman who answered to that description to Bridgeport this morning."

"Do you think," Ida asked, "that she took some other train from here?"

"Of course, I couldn't say as to that, ma'am, but I think not. She went straight away from the station as soon as we got in."

"Excuse me, but how did you happen to notice that?"

"Well, I thought her a queer customer anyway. She didn't seem to be able to use her hands any, and so I took pains to be at the platform to help her off. She wouldn't let me."

"She could help herself, then?"

"After a fashion, yes. If she had let me take her hand I could have made it easy for her to get down the steps, but she grumbled that she'd go by herself and told me to mind my own business. That made me kind of hot, and I told her it was part of my business to assist feeble passengers."

"What did she say to that?"

The conductor grinned.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he answered, "but I'd rather not repeat her words. They didn't sound nice coming from a woman, and you wouldn't like to hear them."

"Well, then, what did she do?"

"She jumped from the steps."

"Ah! I think I understand why she wouldn't give you her hand. Did she give you a ticket?"

"Of course! I wouldn't have let her ride without one."

"But did she hand it to you?"

The conductor thought a moment.

"No, by gracious!" he exclaimed, "she didn't. I thought nothing of it at the time, but now that you call my mind to it I remember that her ticket was stuck in the back of the seat in front of her. Men often put their tickets there, you know, so as not to be interrupted in their reading when the conductor comes along, but not many women do it."

"She put it there before you came along," said Ida, "because she didn't want to take the chance of showing you her hands."

"Why was that, ma'am?"

"Because she was handcuffed."

"Good gracious!"

"She is a murderess," Ida went on calmly, "and I am trying to run her down. Have you been at the station since your train came in?"

"Yes."

"And haven't seen her since?"

"No."

"Then show which way she went."

He showed her, and Ida started on a long hunt in that direction. Her work at this stage in the case was such as detectives often have to do.

It takes great patience, is generally very slow, and frequently leads to false trails.

She asked questions of policemen and storekeepers. Had they seen such a woman as she described between half-past seven and eight o'clock that morning?

In most cases she got no information at all; in some she got information that wasn't worth having.

Now and then she got a point that seemed to be a clew.

A man who kept a fruit stand was sure he had seen the woman, and he told which way she went when she came to the corner just beyond his place.

This was the most promising clew she had got for a long time, the trouble being that nobody around that next corner had seen such a woman.

Of course, there was danger in asking so many questions of so many different people, but there are times when that is the only thing the best detectives can do.

At one time Ida suspected that she was being watched.

A ragged youngster idled up to where she was talking with a man and seemed to be listening.

Ida, who saw that the man could give her no point of value, suddenly said "Thank you," and went on.

She watched the boy narrowly and saw him go down a certain street.

As quickly as possible she turned about and went to the head of that street to see where he went.

He was not a dozen yards away, playing a game with other boys.

"I wonder if he was onto me?" she thought a little anxiously. "It can't be helped. If he has given a tip he has given it and I can't help it. I've got to take chances and keep at it."

So for several hours Ida kept at this sort of work.

Once she went to the place where she had told Patsy to come.

He had not been there, and she left a note to say that she was certain Mrs. Kramer had come as far as Bridgeport, but that she had not yet got onto her hiding place.

Then she went at it again.

Along toward evening she quickened her pace suddenly.

She had caught a glimpse of a woman with her hands under a shawl.

There was a heavy veil over the woman's face.

In height she seemed to be the same as Mrs. Kramer.

She had opened a door and disappeared in a building just as Ida caught sight of her.

But the detective saw how she opened the door.

It was done by turning her back half to it and pushing with her shoulder.

"Is it possible?" thought Ida, and immediately she answered her own question. "Of course it's possible. I must find out about it at once."

In a moment she was at the place where the woman had disappeared.

It was the side door to a saloon.

Without any hesitation Ida opened it and went in.

She found herself in a dirty back room of the saloon.

There were one table and four chairs there.

At one side was a door with a slide in it.

The slide was closed.

At the table, facing the street door, sat the woman who had attracted her attention.

She was motionless, but Ida felt that her eyes were upon her.

The shawl concealed her arms entirely, and the veil hid her face.

Was it Mrs. Kramer?

Ida could not tell. The sound of her voice would be enough.

"Good-evening," said Ida, as she dropped into another chair.

The woman made no response.

A pause followed that was a little awkward.

"Why don't the bartender come?" Ida asked impatiently; "didn't you knock for him?"

At this the veiled woman swung about in her chair so as to face Ida squarely.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, harshly, "by asking questions of me? You're on the sneak, you are!"

It was not Mrs. Kramer's voice—unless that bold woman knew how to disguise her tones.

"An honest woman," retorted Ida, "would answer a civil question."

"Ah!" snarled the other, "you think I'm not honest, eh?"

"I have my doubts," said the detective, coolly.

"Perhaps you'd be satisfied if you saw my face?"

"I wouldn't mind."

"Then see here!"

With a sudden movement the woman threw aside her shawl and tore off her veil.

It was a villainous face that appeared—but it was not Mrs. Kramer's.

She glared hatefully at the detective for several seconds.

"Now what do you think?" she demanded.

"I still have my doubts," Ida answered, and laughed a little.

The woman was terribly enraged.

"I'd like to kill you for your impudence!" she hissed. "I could do it, too."

She had a pitcher in her hand that had been covered by her shawl.

With a snarl of rage she got suddenly to her feet and raised the pitcher as if she would strike Ida down with it.

The detective did not stir.

"Come, come," said Ida, quietly, "rap for the bartender and get your growler filled. I shan't interfere with you."

For a moment the woman stood in her threatening attitude.

Then she lowered the pitcher and went to the door of the barroom and knocked on the slide.

"You've got nerve," she said, in a low voice, "and it saves you this time, but look out! I won't answer for your life if I see you spying on me again."

The bartender opened the slide and the woman quickly pulled the veil over her face.

She put the pitcher on the shelf and the bartender took it away.

While he was gone the woman did not stir, and Ida, too, remained motionless.

"Here y'are," said the bartender, presently, putting the pitcher on the shelf. "Have anything, ma'am?"

This last was to Ida.

"No," was the answer, "I'm going out with my friend."

The woman, who had put a coin on the shelf, turned like a flash.

"You're not going with me!" she snapped.

"I'm going out when you do," returned Ida.

There was a low curse, and it seemed as if the woman had lost all control of herself and was about to attack the detective.

Ida was prepared for her, though she sat still, but the bartender suddenly opened the door and came in.

He put his hands on the woman's shoulders and pushed her to the outside door.

"Take your row to the street," said he, angrily. "I won't have any nonsense in here."

He opened the outside door and the woman stepped out.

"You, too," said the bartender to Ida.

"All right," she answered cheerfully, and passed him.

The woman was walking rapidly, but she turned to see if Ida were following.

That was exactly what the detective intended to do, and she didn't object to be seen doing it.

Ida had her own ideas about this strange incident.

The woman was not Mrs. Kramer, but the detective believed that she had found the straightest clew yet to Mrs. Kramer's hiding place.

Seeing that she was followed, the woman shrugged her shoulders and went on.

Presently she went up the steps of a shabby-looking house and stopped for a moment at the door.

"Well," she snarled, "here is where I live. Are you satisfied, Madam Pry?"

"Good-evening," said Ida, and walked past as if she didn't care whether the woman lived there or not.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE FIRE.

The detective went to the head of the street only a few steps away, and looked back.

She saw the woman just closing the door of the house behind her.

"All right," thought Ida, "she isn't faking. She lives there, and if she's up to the game I think she is, Mrs. Kramer is there, also."

It was growing dark now, and Ida felt that she must hurry.

A dozen different plans occurred to her, but most of them were impossible.

She would have liked Patsy's help, but she did not know where he was, and if she should go to the place where they were to meet, Mrs. Kramer might take advantage of her absence and slip away.

Then the chase would have to begin over again.

"Of course," thought Ida, "I may be mistaken in all this, but it won't do to take any chances of her getting a fresh start on me if she is in there."

"I might get the police to make a raid, but that would mean sending word to headquarters, which would give her chance and time to get away, and then

if the raid proved that she was not there and had not been there, I should be in a worse fix than I am now.

"The first thing to do is to find if Mrs. Kramer is in that house."

The street on which the house stood was not a long one.

All of one side was taken by a factory.

Men and women at this moment were leaving the factory at the end of their day's work.

The street was stopped at the further end by another factory, and there were no cross streets or alleys between.

So the only way to get to or from the house was by coming up to the point where Ida stood watching.

She took pains to conceal herself so that she could look down the length of the street without being seen from the house.

Ida did not move from this position until all the working people from the factory had gone away and the neighborhood was again quiet.

Meantime nobody had come from or gone into the house she had been watching.

"I shall have to take the chance of a short disappearance," she decided.

Near her was a tenement house. The front door was open and several persons had gone in and out while she stood there.

Ida went in and passed the stairs to the end of the ground floor hall.

It was dark there, but she needed no light.

It was as easy for her to change the appearance of her clothing as it was for the men detectives.

Her clothes were made for that purpose, and when Ida came out again nobody would have supposed that she was the same person.

Of course, she could not change the appearance of her face as the men could, but even there she had made changes that she believed would save her from recognition in the darkness of the evening.

Nobody was stirring on the short street when she again stood at the head of it.

"I don't believe anything has happened in this short time," she said to herself.

She went down past the house that interested her and knocked at the door of the one next to it.

A sign in a window showed that boarders were taken there, and there was a small bay window on the second floor.

The door was opened by a colored woman.

"Got any empty rooms?" asked Ida.

"Yas'm."

"What price?"

"Meals an' all?"

"Yes."

"It's three dollars a week for meals an' room accordin' to size."

"Let me see the rooms."

The colored woman admitted her and showed her the front room on the first floor.

"That's two dollars," said she.

"I'd rather not be on the street floor."

"Come upstairs, then."

On the next floor the colored woman showed a hall-bedroom that she said could be had for a dollar.

Ida shook her head.

"It isn't big enough," she said. "I've got a trunk at the depot and there's no place for it here."

"Go'n' to work in the shop?" asked the woman.

"I shall work near here," Ida replied.

The colored woman opened another door.

"That's the bes' room in the house," said she. "The landlady uses it reg'lar, but you can have it if you want to pay as much as three dollars and a half, money down."

"All right, I'll take it."

It was the room with the bay window.

The detective paid the colored woman for a week in advance, and in a moment had the room to herself.

"I'll send for my trunk later in the evening," she said, "and I shan't be down to supper to-night as I ate only a few minutes ago."

The colored woman seemed satisfied and closed the door.

Ida went at once to the bay window.

She found, as she had expected, that from it she could see the front door of the next house without difficulty as well as the entire length of the street.

"Now it's a game of waiting," she said to herself, and sat down with her eyes upon the next house.

She had been watching less than a minute when a woman went from the house and walked rapidly up the street.

Ida recognized her as the one whom she had met in the saloon.

She saw her go to the street end and stand for a moment looking around.

"I wonder if she's looking for me?" was the detective's thought.

After a moment the woman came back.

She had not been to any store, and she had not spoken to anybody. It seemed likely, therefore, that she had been out on a scouting errand.

Ida saw her go into the house again.

A few minutes later another woman appeared, coming from the end of the street.

This one also entered the next house and did so, as Ida could see clearly, without ringing the bell.

Less than a minute after this two women came down.

They also stopped at the next house, and one of them rang the bell.

It was impossible to see who met them at the door, but somebody did and let them in.

"Is it only a boarding house?" queried Ida, "and are these women just coming in from work in a factory somewhere?"

That might be it, and it looked all the more so when still another woman came down and entered after ringing the bell.

Four who had not been there when Ida first saw the house had now gone into it, but that was not all.

Another minute passed, and then came two more women, who rang and were admitted in the same way.

Ida was interested and curious, but she saw no reason to regard the matter as mysterious.

If the place was a cheap boarding house it was natural that a number of persons should go into it at this hour.

All were women, but that was easily explained. In a manufacturing city like Bridgeport there are always many boarding houses run for women only.

Six had now gone in, and there was still no sign of anything that Ida wanted to learn.

She decided to try to get a message to Patsy.

Taking her notebook, she wrote a short message in cipher, telling him where she was and that she thought she had found where Mrs. Kramer was hiding.

Having written the note, she tore out the leaf, folded it and wrote on the outside "Charles Thompson."

That was the name by which Patsy was to be known at the place where they were to meet.

Ida had not written the address when she paused and sniffed the air.

Was it smoke she smelled?

It seemed so, and the smell seemed to grow stronger rapidly.

The thought made her a little anxious—not for herself but for her plans.

The house she was in would burn like paper if it caught fire, and so would the other houses in the row.

If one caught the others would be sure to go—or at least all the inmates would have to get out.

Mrs. Kramer might escape in the confusion—that is, if she was really hiding near.

Ida laid the note on the table and went to the door.

When she opened it she almost coughed, the smoke was so thick in the hallway.

A lamp was burning on a stand near the second stairway and by its light Ida saw the colored woman standing at the top of the first flight.

"What's the matter?" the detective demanded. "Where does all this smoke come from?"

The darky breathed heavily through her nose.

"Huh!" said she, "'pears like I do smell smoke."

"Smell it!" cried Ida, "you can feel it! Where does it come from?"

"'Tain't downstairs," returned the darky, doubtfully. "Dar ain't no fire down dar 'cept in the kitchen stove."

"Have you looked in the rooms on this floor?"

"Yas'm, c'ept yourn."

"It comes from upstairs! see!"

Ida pointed up the next flight.

In the dim lamplight she could discern the smoke rolling from underneath a door at the top.

The colored woman came to her side.

"Lordy!" said she, "dat's so! An' dar's a sick chile in dar."

With this she bounded up the flight.

Ida, who hated to leave her watching place even for a few seconds, looked on anxiously.

The darky threw open the door and then staggered back, coughing violently.

She stumbled down the stairs again, holding her apron to her eyes.

"Lord a massy!" she stammered, "can't go in dar nohow! house all on fire an' dat pore sick chile——"

"Coward!" exclaimed Ida, dashing past her.

For the moment there was no thought of Mrs. Kramer.

A helpless child lying in a room that was on fire—that was enough to arouse every bit of courage and energy that Ida had.

The smoke was horribly dense at the top of the stairs.

It rolled out in great clouds, for the darky had left the door open.

Ida put her hand over her mouth and nose and hurried into the room from which it came.

At the further side she could see a dim blaze.

It did not give light enough to see anything else.

She reached out her hand and touched a bed.

From the feeling she could tell that it had been occupied, but there was nobody there now.

The detective had a terrible fear that the child had crawled from the bed and lay somewhere on the floor overcome by the smoke.

Her eyes stung with it and she shut them.

It would choke here to breathe it.

Still holding her mouth and nose, she got on her knees and felt with the other hand all about the floor near the bed.

She found nothing.

Having to breathe, she hastened back to the stairway a moment, and then, opening her eyes, saw what looked like a bundle on the floor of the hall.

Ida picked it up.

It was a child, unconscious it seemed, although it moaned a little when she started downstairs.

At the bottom she met the darky and another woman, the landlady as it proved.

"Ah!" cried the latter, "give her to me!"

The detective was only too glad to have the child taken care of, and she handed her to the landlady.

"Have you given the alarm?" she asked. "We must have water——"

"Done got dat," interrupted the darky. "You go right inter your room now, missy. I'll put the fire out."

She had a pail and dipper in her hands.

In that moment of excitement it seemed to Ida that the whole affair was very strange, but there was no time to think of it just then.

Of course, she did not go back to her room.

Not while she believed the house to be on fire and nobody but a cowardly negress trying to put out the flames.

The darky was halfway up the second flight.

Ida, having given up the child, started after her.

"Better not go up," cried the landlady, "Liza can attend to it alone."

"I'll help her," was Ida's reply.

"You go back," said Liza, turning at the top and facing the detective. "You git burned to deff if you don't."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Ida, "give me that pail!"

She pushed the negress to one side, took the pail from her and again entered the smoky room.

It was not so difficult as before, for much of the smoke had drifted out.

She saw again the faint glow at one side and went to sprinkling it carefully.

"If I had left it to the darky to do," she thought, "she would have poured the whole pailful on the flames at once and that probably would have been worse than letting them alone."

To Ida's satisfaction and somewhat to her surprise, the flames were put out very easily.

There was a short hissing, and then the glow disappeared.

To make certain that no fire was left she stooped and felt cautiously where the fire had been.

By wetting her hand in the pail, for she had not used half the water, she could touch things without scorching her fingers.

What she felt gave her a start of astonishment.

She could not believe it.

Turning to the door she saw the negress standing there.

It was not possible to see the darky's face, but her form was distinct.

"Bring a lamp," said Ida, sharply.

"You don't need no lamp if the fire's out," was the reply.

"Bring a lamp or there'll be trouble!"

The darky grumbled and went downstairs.

Ida heard her voice in conversation with the landlady for a moment, and it was the latter who came up.

She had a lamp.

"You were very brave," she was saying. "If it hadn't been for you my poor child might have smothered to death. I thank——"

The detective interrupted her the moment she could see clearly in the room.

"What does that mean?" she demanded sternly, pointing to the place where the fire had been.

A coal hod stood there, empty save for a handful of charred waste.

CHAPTER VI.

VISITORS FROM THE NEXT HOUSE.

"What does that mean?" Ida repeated.

"Why!" stammered the landlady, "the stuff in the hod must have caught fire somehow."

"Somehow!" echoed Ida, "I should say so. Do you see this?"

She stooped and pointed to a burned match on the floor near the hod.

"Yes," answered the landlady, "I shouldn't wonder if my little girl was playing with matches."

At that moment Ida believed that she had discovered and prevented a horrible crime.

She wanted to ask more questions, for it was clear that the landlady was tangling herself up, and the detective was so indignant that it was all she could do to keep from arresting the woman on the spot.

But Ida had to think of other things.

It was the woman who was probably in the next house that she must arrest.

To do that it was necessary for her to conceal her real character from the landlady here.

So, "I'll investigate this later," Ida said to herself, and went downstairs.

All she said aloud was:

"It seems to me that somebody has been very careless."

"I s'pose so," muttered the landlady, following, "but it's all right now."

"I'm not so sure of that," retorted Ida, turning at the door to her room.

The thought of the child was too much for her.

"Let me see the little one," she demanded.

"She's in here," said the landlady, leading her to the hall bedroom that Ida had refused to take.

The negress was sitting on the bed, holding her child in her arms.

Ida stooped and examined the little one.

She was unconscious but asleep apparently, for she was breathing naturally.

The child, however, was very pale.

"You must have a doctor," said Ida.

"We've had one," answered the landlady.

"When was he here last?"

"This morning."

"He ought to come again, and at once."

Ida saw the negress and the landlady exchange glances.

"I insist on it," continued the detective. "Send your servant out for the doctor. I have an errand that I want done, and she can do it at the same time."

"I can't spare her from the house," said the landlady.

"Then get a boy from some neighbor's house. I don't want to make trouble for you, but that child should be seen to at once. I know something about sickness myself——"

"Couldn't you doctor her, then?"

"No! are you going to send for a doctor?"

Ida spoke very sternly, for her mind was made up to go for a doctor herself if necessary.

"I'll drop Mrs. Kramer if I have to save that child's life," she thought.

"Yes," replied the landlady, evidently badly scared. "I'll send in a minute."

"Have the person you send call at my room for a letter, then. I'll pay for the trouble."

The landlady promised to do so, and Ida entered her own room.

"Is it possible," she reflected with a shudder, "that they meant to smother that child to death by burning waste in a coal hod in her room?"

"Did the child crawl out to get away from the smoke?"

"I must get at the facts about this before I leave Bridgeport."

As she had not lighted the lamp in her room it was now very dark there.

In fact she had written her note to Patsy by the light that came through the window from a street lamp.

Now she fixed the curtains of the bay window so that she could sit there without being seen and yet keep the doorstep of the next house in view.

"A good many people may have been in and out the last five minutes," she said to herself, "but that can't be helped now."

Then she lit the lamp and put her hand on the table where she had left the note to Patsy.

The note was not there.

Ida supposed that she had brushed it to the floor in passing and looked down.

No note in sight there, either.

The detective stood still for a moment.

She began to get a new idea about that fire.

Was it possible that all had been arranged in advance to compel her to expose herself?

Somebody, certainly, had been in her room during her absence upstairs.

It might have been the negress.

Had she been tempted by curiosity to take the note?

It hardly seemed possible, for the darky was busy and evidently excited all through the fire.

Who then? the landlady? or somebody else who lived here and who came along just in time?

Ida had seen but three persons in the house: the landlady, the sick child, and the negress.

Were there others?

She was puzzled by these questions for a short moment.

Still thinking of them she went to the window and was about to sit down when she saw a piece of paper on her chair.

It was the missing note.

"Have I been dreaming?" she asked herself; "am I becoming absent-minded?"

She sat down and looked the note over.

It was just what she had written, and she knew that no one except a Carter detective could make head or tail of it.

That wasn't what troubled her.

Ida was in doubt for a moment as to where she had left the note when she went out.

If she had left it on the chair, why! then all this questioning was for nothing.

But Ida knew that she had not been dreaming, and that she was never absent-minded.

She remembered perfectly that she had laid the note on the table.

The paper could not have gone by itself from table to chair.

Therefore, somebody had been in the room, and that somebody had looked at the note.

"I don't believe," said Ida, very slowly to herself, "that it means anything more than that a prying servant or boarder has been in here and tried to find out something about me."

She sat down with the paper in her hand and looked out at the front steps of the next house.

In spite of what she said to herself she could not feel at ease about it.

There was evidently more to investigate here than she had supposed at first.

All her doubts about the affair were solved in less than a minute.

She still had her eyes fixed on the house next door

when her attention was attracted by a slight noise in her room.

Thinking that the negress or some other person had come to get her letter, she looked toward the hall door.

Nobody was there, but in that glance Ida saw another door opening.

It was the door to the clothes closet of the room.

She had opened that door when she first went into the room and had seen that the closet contained only a few dresses that belonged to the landlady.

At the moment when she caught sight of it now the door was more than half open, and it was still swinging back.

The lamplight showed a woman standing there.

It was the one whom Ida had met in the saloon.

Her face was more villainous looking than before, and the flashing of her eyes showed that she was terribly in earnest.

Her right hand was raised, and in it was a revolver that was pointed straight at Ida.

There are times when even the boldest and quickest of detectives has to lie low.

This was one of them.

Ida never knew anything so well as she did that, if she attempted to resist, she would be shot instantly.

She had no intention of being shot, but she had been in too many perilous situations to feel alarm.

Nothing but coolness could save her, and Ida was perfectly cool.

"If you stir before I give the word," the woman whispered, "I will kill you where you sit!"

"Doubtless," returned Ida.

She almost regretted that she had spoken at all, for the woman's eyes flashed more fiercely, and her hand trembled slightly.

"I've a great mind to fire anyway," she hissed, advancing a step.

Ida made no reply, but she kept her eyes fixed on those of her enemy.

Behind the woman came another.

Both stepped into the main room, and then a third came from the closet.

The second was armed with a revolver also.

The last carried a long knife in one hand and a coil of rope in the other.

"Ida Jones," whispered the first, "you are a prisoner."

The detective laughed lightly.

"I thought there must be some mistake," she said.

"I never supposed that I would be taken for my worst enemy."

"What!"

It was the first woman who spoke, and she was evidently startled by the detective's cool remark.

The others were thrown into such doubt that they glanced at each other inquiringly.

Ida followed up her advantage quickly.

"Do you suppose," she asked, "that I didn't know what I was about when I took a room here? I haven't worked Bridgeport before, but I knew where to come."

"Do you mean to say that you are not Ida Jones, the famous detective?"

"Of course, I do! I've been up against Ida before this, and I ought to know what she looks like. If you had ever seen her you would know, too."

"What are you here for, then?"

"I told you. I came to work the town. If there isn't enough for all of us to do, and you want me to clear out, you might say so without trying to scare me to death."

"But what did you shadow me into the saloon for?"

Ida had to think fast.

Had they really recognized her?

Should she deny that she had shadowed the woman? Making her decision quickly, she answered:

"I was trying to make friends. You wouldn't have it, and I wasn't going to force myself upon you. I sized you up for one of my kind, and I hit it right. didn't I?"

In all this the detective was watching warily for a chance to draw her own weapon.

But the first woman never lowered hers, and it was just as certain as at first that if the detective made a false move, the revolver would be fired.

"How are we going to know that you're straight?" the woman demanded.

"You ought to know already."

"But how?"

"By this," and Ida held up the note she had written to Patsy. "You've read it," she added.

"How do you know?"

"Because it wasn't where I put it. You came in while I was out and looked at it, but you forgot to put it back where you found it."

"The note doesn't mean anything to us."

"What! do you mean to say you don't know the thieves' cipher? Say! you ought to come to New York and take lessons!"

Ida spoke scornfully, and it was clear that she was making the women more than doubtful when a harsh voice from the closet broke in on them:

"Fools! why do you let her play with you? Bind her and bring her at once to our den."

The detective knew that voice.

It was Mrs. Kramer.

The murderess stepped from the closet and looked hatefully at Ida.

"She's laughing at you all the time," added Mrs. Kramer. "Why do you let her? If you don't make her secure while you have the chance she'll give you the slip—and somebody will get hurt."

"Are you sure?" asked the first woman.

"Of course, I am!"

"Then bind her!"

The woman with the coil of rope advanced, and Ida held out her hands.

"If you are determined to make a prisoner of me," she said, "you're welcome. I've been a prisoner before. You'll find out your mistake in time."

The woman with the rope was about to tie Ida's hands, when Mrs. Kramer interfered.

"Stop!" she cried; "see how she offers her hands! don't you know any better than to bind them the way she wants you to? Fasten them behind her back, you idiots!"

The second woman then seized Ida from behind and pulled her arms back.

For one instant Ida wanted to resist, and she believed that there was a chance that she could beat her four foes in a fight, but it seemed better to let them have their way and wait for a better opportunity.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE POWER OF THE MURDERESS.

Meantime the first woman never lowered her weapon, and she held the muzzle so close to Ida's head at this moment that there could have been no escape from death if she had fired.

When the rope had been tied Ida was told to get up and march ahead of them.

"Ah!" croaked Mrs. Kramer, "she's getting a dose of her own medicine now. Many's the unfortunate crook that she has made to walk in the same way."

"I see you still think I am Ida Jones," remarked the detective. "I feel flattered."

"We don't think; we know!" retorted the murderess.

"You'll know more some day," said Ida, laughingly.

The women snarled in their fury that she should be so cool.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Kramer; "her time for laughing is short. We'll laugh last."

Ida did as she was told and walked into the closet, where it proved that there was a secret door into the next house.

This was closed as soon as the last woman had passed.

Up to that time the woman had spoken in low tones.

Now they laughed triumphantly and loudly.

Ida never had seen such hideous creatures in all her experience. Their faces were scarred and bloated, and their deep eyes burned like live coals.

"They really mean to kill me," she thought, "and my chance depends on the pleasure they will take in torturing me first. They will wait till they have me thoroughly frightened before they give the fatal blow. Well, they'll have to wait a long time."

She was taken downstairs and into a back room where she saw three other hags as hideous as her captors.

"Hasn't Mother Blaney come yet?" demanded Mrs. Kramer.

"No," answered one of them, "nobody's been here since you went up."

"Delia," and Mrs. Kramer turned to the woman whom Ida had met in the saloon, "go to the corner and look into Red Jim's place and see if she's there. Ah! won't she be glad when she knows that we've got the woman Carter, the great Nick's assistant!"

"All right," said the woman called Delia, "but don't do anything important while I'm gone. I want to see the circus."

"Oh, we'll all see it. But we must have Mother Blaney."

Delia left the room and Mrs. Kramer told Ida to sit down.

She did so, and the women brought their chairs so that all sat in front of her.

For a moment they leered at her and muttered deep curses under their breaths.

"Whew!" thought the detective, "this is the worst looking lot I ever was up against!"

But she smiled as if she were enjoying it all, and said:

"I suppose this is an initiation into your society. I hope Mother Blaney will like me."

"Young woman!" cried Mrs. Kramer, with horrible harshness, "you can call this an initiation if you like. When you get through with it you will be in another world."

"How interesting!" retorted Ida; "will you all go along, too?"

The murderess was so furious for a moment that she could not speak. When she could control her voice, she said:

"You have a sharp tongue, Miss Jones, and I won't try to talk back. I'd rather tell you a thing or two in plain language so that you can see how I have triumphed over you."

"I am listening," said Ida.

"Well, then, you thought you had me when you cut off my retreat in Greenwich last night."

"Last night!" exclaimed the detective; "why! I was in Hoboken last night."

"You were in Greenwich! It will do you no good to persist in denying that you are Ida Jones. I can see through your disguise. Besides, we know that a woman was asking for me all over Bridgeport this afternoon. You wanted to get on the trail of a woman who went about with her arms under a shawl. Ha! ha! we trapped you finely by sending Delia out with a growler, didn't we? She got in your way, and you thought you had got onto Mrs. Kramer. Oh, ho! that was a good trick to make you show your hand."

"Speaking of hands," said Ida, "you say you had your hands under a shawl. What was that for?"

She asked the question as innocently as if she did not know the reason.

It was her game to make some of the women at least doubt that she was a detective.

So not once did she admit that she knew what Mrs. Kramer was talking about.

"You know as well as I do!" cried the murderess, "for you had me handcuffed last night."

"Did I?"

"Well, no," and Mrs. Kramer was confused for a moment; "I had forgotten. You left me at the station, but you must have known that I was handcuffed when they locked me up in the poor house."

"Oh!"

"You knew it, I say! Well, my hands were ironed, true, but there was a chain a foot long between the bracelets, so I wasn't wholly helpless, oh, no! not wholly. The matron of the poor farm found that out to her sorrow."

"Did you make her take off the bracelets for you?"

"No, though I tried to. I made believe sick, and when she bent over to give me a dose of medicine I siezed her by the throat and pressed my fingers in deep, and held on and pressed harder till her face was black and her eyes were rolling out of her head. Then I knew it was safe to let go."

Ida found it hard to keep from shuddering as the murderess told these details, looking like a fiend and speaking in a hoarse unnatural voice.

The other women shut their jaws together and gloated on every word.

"When I let go," Mrs. Kramer continued, "I cut her throat to make perfectly sure. I had to do it with an ordinary table knife. It was troublesome work with my hands ironed, and I gave myself a cut on the fingers, but I didn't notice that till an hour later."

"When I did see it I bound up my hand and kept both hands under a shawl that I stole from a farmhouse. I stole a hat, too, but not at the same house."

"I tell you these things to show that I am no longer afraid of you, for dead men tell no tales."

Here she thrust her face close to Ida's, and added:

"Neither do dead women!"

"I guess they don't," said Ida.

At this moment Delia returned.

All looked inquiringly at her.

"Mother Blaney isn't at Red Jim's," she said.

"Has she been there this evening?" asked Mrs. Kramer.

"No."

"What's become of her?"

There seemed to be anxiety as well as surprise in the tones, for nearly all the women spoke at once.

Ida was encouraged.

Delay would be useful, and if anything had happened to keep Mother Blaney from coming, there might be a way to capture all these hags at once.

"I don't know," Delia replied, harshly. "I believe in going ahead without her."

"That's against the rules," said a woman who had not spoken before.

Ida had noticed that she was the one who seemed most doubtful as to whether the prisoner was really Ida Jones.

"If I could only make them dispute about that!" she thought. "If I can make them quarrel among themselves I shall be safe."

"But we can't wait forever!" cried Delia.

"That's so," said Mrs. Kramer.

"I agree with you," said Ida, "and I hope you will find Mother Blaney. She will tell you who I am."

"Do you know Mother Blaney?" asked several of the women together.

"Of course!" cried Ida, scornfully. "Would I be sitting here without flinching if I didn't know that Mother Blaney would square me when she comes?"

In truth the detective never had heard of Mother Blaney before this evening.

The women looked at each other with more doubt than ever.

"I don't take any stock in what she says," exclaimed Mrs. Kramer. "It's all bluff, I tell you——"

"We mustn't take too many chances," interrupted one of the women. "Mother Blaney can settle it quick enough when she comes."

Others broke in with the same argument.

"Well," said Mrs. Kramer, unwillingly, at last,

"we'll wait a little while longer. Go out again, Delia, and look for her. If you don't find her pretty soon come back and we'll finish the business. I won't let it wait all night."

Delia grumbled that she had to do all the running, but she went out.

As soon as she had gone, Mrs. Kramer said:

"I want to speak to the prisoner alone."

The others seemed to be afraid to trust her with the prisoner, but Mrs. Kramer ordered them out, and after a little delay they went into another room.

Then Mrs. Kramer said:

"There is just one chance for you to save your life. If you will take it quickly, you will be spared."

CHAPTER VIII.

DELIA'S RETURN.

"You are very kind," responded Ida, coolly. "What is the chance?"

She felt that at that moment she was in the greatest danger, for it seemed likely that the murderess had sent the others out so as to do her deed of vengeance without interference.

Mrs. Kramer looked steadily at her, and said:

"I suppose it's useless to ask you to join us."

"Haven't I said that I would like to?" exclaimed Ida. "Didn't I say that I came to Bridgeport to work the town, and that I wanted to get friendly with Delia?"

"Ida Jones," responded the murderess, harshly, "it is of no use for you to try to pretend that sort of thing to me. You can fool the others, for they don't know you. You can't fool me, and you'd better not try any longer."

Ida shrugged her shoulders and was silent.

"I don't think you'd join us," continued Mrs. Kramer, "and so I won't say anything more about that. But I know that you will keep a promise if you make it."

"Thank you."

"Wait! Listen to me. I don't care anything about Mother Blaney and her tribe. They're useful enough

when a woman needs help as I did this morning. I couldn't have got rid of my handcuffs if I hadn't been able to come here. Delia filed them off for me, and the rest of them will stand by me.

"But they are no good when it comes to sharp business. I've no use for them. I have use for my daughter, Kate. I also want to keep in business myself.

"This is the chance for your life. Give me your promise that you'll let me and Kate alone, and in two minutes you will be able to get safely out of this den.

"What do you say?"

The detective was certain that if she refused at once her death would come instantly, for the murderess stood bending toward her with one hand behind her back.

"How would you manage it?" asked Ida, cautiously.

Mrs. Kramer's eyes gleamed fiercely.

It was evident that she hoped Ida would consent.

"Easy enough," she answered. There is the door to the back stairs. We can go up and through the secret door into the other house where you were before.

"We can fasten the secret door behind us so that they will find it impossible to open it.

"Then we can go down the stairs in the other house and out by the back door, where there is a short alley that leads to another street.

"Once there you can trust to your own feet, can't you?"

"I suppose so," said Ida.

"Then do you consent?"

Ida looked the woman in the eyes.

"Do you mean to kill me at once if I refuse?" she asked.

"Instantly!" hissed the murderess, drawing still closer.

She brought her hand from behind her back and showed a long gleaming knife.

"The blade is tipped with poison," she whispered. "I have only to scratch your skin with it, and you will die in a minute—a horrible, painful death!"

As she spoke she waved the blade back and forth within an inch of the detective's throat.

"Let me ask one question first," said Ida, hoping to gain time.

"Be quick, then, for Delia may be back any minute!"

"I want to know about the fire in a coal hod in the house next door."

The murderess laughed brutally.

"A fine trick to get you to leave your room," she said. "I was sure it was you who hired a room there, but the others were not so certain. I knew that if you showed great courage it would be you, and I thought you might give yourself away by arresting the landlady."

"Did you mean to have the child die from suffocation?"

"What did I care for the child? But to answer your question, no. The landlady laid her on the floor of the hall before lighting the fire in the hod. So the child was safe enough, and the trick worked, for you risked your life, and I knew it must be you.

"Then we found your cipher note. Of course we wouldn't let you send it, and we caught you before you could get away from the house. Does that answer your questions?"

"Yes," replied Ida, slowly, "I think it does."

"Then do you promise to stop hounding me and my daughter?"

Ida drew a long breath, looked the murderess in the eyes, and answered:

"No! a thousand times, no! Do your worst!"

Mrs. Kramer was taken by surprise.

She had expected a consent, and for an instant she gasped and stared.

It was hard to believe that the detective would not yield to such a horrible threat as she had made.

Starting back two paces, she raised the knife above her head, and began——

"Then this moment is your——"

At this point there was a confused noise in the next room.

The voices of several women were heard talking excitedly at once.

Among them could be distinguished the harsh tones of Delia.

The door opened, and Delia and the others crowded in.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mrs. Kramer, angrily, and she thrust her knife out of sight.

"Mother Blaney's pinched!" gasped Delia.

Her eyes were staring wildly, and she stood in the middle of the room wringing her hands.

"Pinched!" echoed Mrs. Kramer, astonished.

"Yes. It's the work of the Carters. They are in town. I heard of it at Red Jim's."

"Are you sure?"

"There can't be any mistake. What shall we do without her?"

Delia seemed to have lost her head and to have forgotten all about their prisoner.

"Do?" screamed Mrs. Kramer, "kill the Carter here! we can do that much at least."

"Yes!" cried other voices, "kill her! don't waste a second."

"We won't."

✗ It was Mrs. Kramer who spoke last.

She flourished her knife again and made a leap at Ida.

The others pushed close to see the fatal blow fall.

Suddenly Delia caught Mrs. Kramer's knife arm with one hand and her shoulder with the other, and hurled her clear across the room so that she struck the wall and fell in a heap.

"Well I guess nit!" shouted "Delia," and in that voice there was then a new and deeper tone.

It was the voice of a man.

"Patsy!" gasped Ida.

She was as much astonished as any of the hags who had captured her.

Patsy lost no time in finishing his work.

As he spoke he swung his arms about and knocked two of the screaming women to the floor.

Then he ripped off the costume he had on and dropped it.

"Hang women's clothes!" he muttered, "they get in a fellow's way!"

At this moment Ida stood up.

Her hands were free.

All the time she had been sitting there she had been patiently working her wrists to stretch and loosen the cord that tied her.

She had hoped to get her hands free in time to resist Mrs. Kramer.

It was not too late now, she thought, to do something to help in capturing the whole gang.

But she found that her arms were almost powerless because they had been kept so long in one position.

The first woman she tackled slipped from her grasp and fled to the next room.

"Never mind, Ida," cried Patsy, "they can't get away. There's a squad of Bridgeport police at the door waiting for them to come out and be captured."

At this moment the two whom he had knocked down were scrambling to their feet and trying to get away.

Patsy was leaping from one to the other and slipping bracelets on their wrists.

He made no attempt to stop the others.

There had been so much noise and screaming during these first few seconds that neither he nor Ida noticed what was happening to Mrs. Kramer.

Now that the others had run from the room they heard her groaning horribly.

She was writhing helplessly on the floor where she had fallen.

There was a red streak across her cheek.

Even as Patsy and Ida turned to her she gave a fearful gasp, shuddered from head to toe, and lay still.

The murderess was dead.

"I understand," said Ida, in a low, horror-stricken tone, "she told me her knife was poisoned. When you threw her the blade accidentally scratched her skin, drew blood—and she has come to the end that she intended for me."

"Well," said Patsy, "I can't say that I'm sorry. But she deserved the gallows. Let's go out and see how the boys are getting on."

There was a lot of screaming going on in front of the house.

All the women as they dashed out fell into the hands

of policemen who had been stationed there to receive them.

In short, every woman in the gang was arrested, including the negress and the landlady of the next house.

The New York detectives did not have to make a charge against them.

"You see," Patsy explained to Ida, "the police here have been after this gang for some time. They have all the evidence they need, I think.

"The gang was led by a woman called Mother Blaney——"

"I've heard of her," Ida interrupted, with a laugh.

"And I made her acquaintance about an hour ago," said Patsy. "I arrived in Bridgeport some time after you did and went to the place where we were to meet. As you weren't there, and I found no message, I concluded that you were at work on a clew. So I went back to the railroad station and asked some questions that showed me you had got on Mrs. Kramer's trail.

"Then it struck me that Mrs. Kramer must have friends among the criminals of the city, and I went to headquarters to see if I could get any points there.

"They told me they had been trying to get hold of a gang made up, as they believed, of women, and led by one named Blaney.

"Mother Blaney, they said, had been shrewd enough never to be seen with any of the gang, and the police were not certain where they hung out.

"Of course they didn't know where Mother Blaney lived, or they would have had her long ago.

"I went out on a still hunt. About an hour ago I dropped into a saloon near here, kept by a bad character known as Red Jim.

"While I was there a woman came in, to whom Red Jim said, 'hello, mother.'

"'Shut up!' she retorted. 'Don't call me mother.'

"That was enough for me, she was so mad about it, and when she left the place I took her in on suspicion.

"She made a nice little scrap of it," and Patsy laughed, "but I held on and took her to the cooler.

"There, under threats, I got her to tell where the

gang might be found, and I got onto the fact that a woman named Delia would be on the watch for her.

"The rest you can guess. I laid for Delia, caught her, and borrowed her rig.

"Then, after copying her face, I came back with a squad of police and we wound the thing up."

"You were just in time," said Ida. "In another minute I would have had my hands free, but they weren't going to allow me another minute."

"The Carters are always in time, Ida," Patsy remarked, to which she responded.

"Yes, but I don't want a closer call than that was."

It was so early in the evening when their work was done that many stores were still open.

"I know a farmer's wife who ought to have a new hat," said Patsy, as they passed a milliner's on the way to the railroad station.

"So do I," returned Ida, "and it's lucky I am along, for I shall know what to buy her."

They went into the store, and Ida bought a hat which was probably worth a good deal more than the one that had been stolen. They ordered it sent to the farmer near Greenwich, and then went on to the station.

When they had reported to Nick, which they did before midnight, he said:

"That really winds up the case, but we have still to find the diamond star."

THE END.

How the Carters found that wonderful gem at last will be told in the next number of this weekly, No. 320, under the title, "Nick Carter and the Diamond Star; or, Placing the Guilt Where it Belonged." It all came about through Patsy's joining in a search for a strange cat. There was something else on the tapis besides a cat hunt, and Patsy knew it. It led him up against as pretty a piece of burglary as could be imagined. How Ida found the missing link, and the sharp detective work that followed, kept their hands full to the limit, and for a time it was anything but a sure thing which side would win out. See complete account of this big case in the next number.

STORIES OF MYSTERY.

The stories of mystery are pouring in by the bushel.

The contest has decidedly caught on.

The stories are capital.

The writers have studied Nick Carter to advantage.

Keep up the good work, boys.

For list of prizes and particulars, see page 31.

A Ghost Story.

(By Frank Bowman, Cleveland, O.)

It was night. Slowly the great silvery moon mounted into the star-studded heavens. A deep silence, a silence one seemed to feel lay upon the face of the earth. A solitary star shot across the firmament and disappeared beyond.

I was not a very superstitious young fellow at that time, but thought I: "If there are such things as ghosts and goblins and imps roaming about this world, which, of course, is very improbable, to-night would be an ideal night for them." And instinctively I glanced hurriedly about me, half expecting to see an apparition in white rise from the ground to greet me.

The morning of this same day I, with Carlo, one of my favorites, had started for my uncle's farm, which was about three miles distant, and I was now returning home. My path, a well-trodden one, led me through the very heart of Senobaugh's woods. Here and there patches of light fell upon the path through the openings in the somewhat dense foliage above, making it a very easy matter to see my way along the path.

About halfway a newly erected rail fence crossed the path and was lost to view in the gloom beyond. I had passed this and had walked a short distance on the other side, when suddenly I heard something spring upon the fence and the next moment the patter of feet upon my track. In an instant all my previous thoughts of ghosts and goblins revived within me, and with my heart in my very mouth I broke into a mad run. And, oh, how I ran! I ran as one can only run under similar circumstances, goaded on by the wildest fear. But strain as I would this unseen demon gained rapidly on me. Now he was upon my very heels; now he was about to leap upon my shoulders. I cast one fleeting glance behind me. There it was—a ragged spot of pure white about the size of my two fists. That was all I saw, and it was enough. But now my breath came in great gasps, the perspiration stood out in beads upon my forehead. I could not keep up much longer, for my limbs were already weakening beneath me; they seemed paralyzed. My speed slackened—slowly, slowly. Now I reeled, turned half around, and as I did so I saw it coming. I uttered one last despairing cry. The next moment I felt its body strike me on the chest, and then I knew no more.

When I came to I felt something rough and sticky pass over my face. I sat up and looked around. Then it all came to me in a rush, and I laughed, but it was a wretched laugh. Nevertheless, I understood, for at my side stood

Carlo, my favorite, his hot breath fanning my face. I reached out my hand and stroked his neck. "You rascal," said I, "that was a scare you gave me." Then I looked at the single spot of white on his breast and laughed again.

On leaving my uncle's I had not been able to find the dog, and so had gone without him. But he had returned not long after I left, and finding that I had gone started out after me. His joy at overtaking me had caused him to leap against me the way he did.

A Messenger's Fright.

(By Albert Koeppel, Pekin, Ill.)

It was a cold, dark night in January; the snow was falling fast and thick and a fierce wind was blowing it into large drifts everywhere.

The Cannon Ball Express was late in arriving in the little town of Cliffdale. The express messenger was very busy sorting his carload of express packages and boxes. The train crew were rushing here and there, giving and receiving orders and signals, and everything seemed in harmony with the dark and mysterious night.

It so happened that on this night the express agent at this town had a corpse of a man for the express, and as the car was jammed full, the messenger had to strap the huge coffin-like box on the front platform of the car. The late train pulled out and the snow fell very thick over the body of the dead man.

As it happened this messenger was a very superstitious fellow, and he dreaded the sight of a corpse, but on this particular night he forgot completely about the corpse, until nearly the end of his run.

He at last thought of it, and went to the door, opened it, and looked out. What he saw there must have scared him very much, for he jumped back with a yell of fright and terror.

Slamming and bolting the door, he ran to the other end of the car, and yelled for the brakeman. The latter came in and the messenger told him to take a look at the box on the front platform. He did, but no sooner did he set eyes on the box than he also took to his heels.

They both went for the conductor, who was a very strong-nerved person. He asked what was wanted, and the messenger told him there was a large, white object sitting on the coffin.

The conductor at once scented a mystery. He pulled out a large revolver, and, going to the door, looked out and saw the object which had frightened the messenger and brakeman.

He at once demanded, in a stern tone of voice: "Who sits there?"

To their surprise, the white object got up, and, shaking the snow in every direction, told them that he was a half-frozen hobo, who was stealing a ride. The poor fellow certainly got a good ride, for they grabbed him by the collar and gave him a ride to the ceiling of the car about half a dozen times. The hobo, in his turn, was very frightened, and, seeing his chance when the train was slowing down for a water tank, he darted through a door and escaped.

Robbery and Murder.

(By Ned Holmes, Lexington, Neb.)

In the little town of Centreville, there lived a man who was called the Professor. He was a Darwinite, and had a collection of all kinds of animals, among them a fine monkey, named Bijo. He lived alone, except for an old colored couple. One day he was found dead in his big armchair. One arm hung down over the chair, and, lying on the carpet, was a handsome little .32-calibre revolver. One of the window panes was broken by a second shot fired by the assassin. Robbery was evidently the motive, for his money could not be found. He had kept it in a box in the monkey's cage. The old negro and his wife were arrested for the murder, and placed in jail. But nothing could be proved.

A reward of ten thousand dollars was offered for the arrest and conviction of the murderer. A detective named Harry Sly took up the case. On examining the window where the bullets had "entered," as the prosecutor had put it at the inquest, he found that the particles of glass from the broken pane lay upon the window sill outside.

The shot that killed the professor had been fired from the inside of the room. The murderer, then, must positively have been in the room.

The detective looked around a while, and then went to the police station and said to the chief: "I believe I have discovered the murderer, and if you will come with me to the house I will bring you face to face with the assassin and induce him to admit his guilt." The chief consented, and they went to the house. The detective said: "If you will wait a while I will show you the murderer. While we wait let me show you a few of the tricks the professor taught Bijo. Stand up, Bijo." The animal obeyed. The detective placed an apple on the head of the monkey and he remained motionless, while the detective shot it off. Sly then placed the revolver in the monkey's hand, and then they withdrew to the other side of the room. There was a loud report as the animal touched the delicate hair trigger, and the chief heard the zip of the bullet, which struck the wall close to his head. The chief sprang forward excitedly. Harry followed more slowly. Going to the cage, he took from it a large cocoanut which he laid upon the table, pressing upon it with his two hands as he did so. The chief was astonished to see the shell separate in halves, disclosing crisp bank notes and United States bonds of large denomination.

"How in the name of all that is wonderful do you account for this, Mr. Sly?" asked the chief.

"When I was put on the case," replied Harry, "I saw this nut in the monkey's cage and noticed that the animal had made no attempt to get at the meat. I became suspicious, and examined it. The old negress had testified that her master kept his money in the box with the nuts. This helped me in making the discovery. The professor neglected to close the box, and Bijo helped himself after he had slain his master, discarding this unique money-bank for another nut when he discovered its spurious character. If it was Bijo the robber, why not Bijo the assassin? I acted on the suggestion, and on several occasions proved the correctness of my theory by placing the revolver in the monkey's way, which he invariably handled until it was discharged. Thus poor, innocent Bijo was guilty of a double crime."

Harry got his reward, and was greatly complimented for his skillful solving of a difficult problem.

The Deacon's Bride.

(By H. H. Woods, Tahlequah, I. T.)

Everybody in the little town of Fame, I. T., was excited to the limit, for Deacon Raymond, of that town, who, just six months before, had married, was dead; shot, as it was stated, by an assassin, when coming up to his own gate.

Every one had his suspicions, but the evidence pointed to an old darkey, who was arrested. The statement was that he was seen coming from the spot a few minutes after the murder, with a basket under his arm, which the people supposed contained the weapons, and so he was locked up.

Meanwhile, the deacon's wife, who was a little, child-like woman, with tender blue eyes, was so overcome with grief that she was seldom seen out. Just three days before the trial of the old darkey, Detective Moody, of Texas, arrived, and set to work on the case.

He was often seen walking about the spot of the murder, and the house of the murdered man, but never saying a word.

At last the day of the trial arrived. The court-house was jammed with a crowd of anxious people, among them, in the first row of seats, sat the deacon's wife.

The trial began, and ended, as all trials do; then it adjourned till next morning, when the jury retired. When the jury came back the crowd was spell-bound, as the chairman rendered the verdict, "Guilty."

But just then a voice rang out:

"He is not guilty, for he did not commit that crime!"

All eyes turned, to see the detective stride up to the bench, and then heard: "Your honor, I demand a hearing."

"You shall have it," said the judge; and then the detective told how he had hung around the scene of the crime.

How he had discovered the window had been raised, for the first time that winter, in the deacon's bedroom.

How he had found a little revolver, with one chamber empty, beneath the window.

How he found, engraved, the initials of the deacon's wife.

"Now, Silas," addressing the old darkey, "tell your story."

"On Saderday night, as I'se 'turning home, old Deacon Raymond, he cotches up wid me, and we'se walks 'long 'gothor. He saams gratly agitated, and says to me: 'Silas, do youse knows I be bin worried ter death since I'se mar——' But right dar, as we gits eben with hes gate, a shot is fared, and old deacon he falls; it looks to me likes it comes from his lib'ary win'ow. I'se nearly scared to death, and I lited."

Just then the people's eyes were directed to the deacon's wife, who was white as a corpse, and hissing through her clinched teeth: "It's a lie, a lie; it's a lie, I tell you." Then she sank to the floor in a dead swoon.

After the adventuress, as the deacon's wife proved to be, was taken to the jail, she confessed all. That she had married the deacon for his money, and, after finding he had little, and being tired of him, she resolved to kill him. When the people of Fame heard this, they nearly went wild, while the detective received a reward, and also great praise.

The Haunted House.

(By Robert Sinclair, Columbus, Ohio.)

The moon was shining down brightly through a scud of fleecy white clouds.

It was just twelve o'clock on this warm summer's night, and the small village of Alton was wrapped in slumber.

Two boys were walking briskly along the highway just outside the town. These boys had not walked far over two miles along this lonely road at this late hour for mere pleasure. They were on an adventure which they thought would afford a little excitement for them, and it did, as we shall see.

About two miles from the village stood an old frame building, known as the Woodruff House. This house was thought to be haunted, and people gave the place a wide berth, especially at night. It was three years since the last family left the place. They said that they heard strange noises in the old house at night, which they could in no way account for. The three preceding families told the same story.

The owners, seeing their property going to ruin, offered fifty dollars reward to the person or persons who would go to the old house and succeed in unraveling the mystery.

These two boys had undertaken the job, and that was what brought them so late at night along this dismal road.

As they rounded a curve in the road, the large building loomed up before them in the moonlight.

Lighting the lanterns, they went through all the rooms. After satisfying themselves that the rooms were all empty, they retired to a small room on the second floor.

There was a small hall from the door of the room to the stairs.

When they were in the room, they lay down on the blankets which they had brought with them, and were soon asleep. But they did not sleep long.

They had been asleep about an hour when they were awakened by a rattling noise. They jumped up and listened, but the noise had ceased. One of the boys, Harry Dresser by name, opened the door and looked out, but he could not distinguish anything in the dark. Presently he

thought he heard a faint noise near the stairs. He listened again, but the noise had ceased. He did not hear anything, but he drew his revolver and fired in the direction whence the sound came, but he did not hit anything, as they found in the morning.

The boys talked and planned all day, and finally George Stillman, the other boy, suggested a plan to catch the "ghost" that seemed to offer success.

That afternoon George went to his home in the village and procured a large steel trap, which he used on his various hunting trips. This he took to the old house. Before they went to bed that night the boys set the trap and placed it near the head of the stairs. This done, they lay down in their blankets as usual, and were soon asleep.

Near the middle of the night they were awakened by the noise of the trap as it sprang. After lighting the lantern, they went to examine the trap. They expected to see a man with his foot in the trap, but there was no man in the trap, nor "ghost," but there was a rabbit, a wild rabbit. The boys were so astonished they could hardly speak.

"Well, I declare," exclaimed George, when he found his voice, "I thought we would catch something more than a rabbit." Nevertheless they discovered what it was that made the noise.

They got the reward, and were praised for the courage which they showed in unraveling the mystery.

It was a long time before it was found how the rabbits made such a rattling noise, but it was finally discovered that they got between the walls and climbed up to the attic. This was what made the noise. From the attic they easily got inside the house.

The Mystery of the Vault.

(By Harry Selatsick, New York, N. Y.)

"I'll be a ruined man if you do not solve this mystery of the vault, Mr. Fox," said the president of the N—— bank, as he sat conversing with the keen detective. "I discovered it in this manner: Last week, one of my steady depositors came to me and told me he wanted to draw out all his savings, as he intended to sail to Europe. I accompanied him to the vault and found it closed, as usual, but on opening it I started back aghast, for every drawer was rummaged, and valuable papers were lying scattered all over the floor. Not wishing to be exposed, I gave him the money out of my own pocket, and ever since things have been disappearing from the vault, although it is closed as usual."

The detective promised to take the case, and, after examining the vault, left the bank in the disguise of an old woman. He had hardly stepped out of the bank, when his attention was attracted to a roughly-dressed individual across the street.

"Reddy, the wharf rat," muttered the detective. "I wonder what mischief he is up to now." "Reddy" was an ex-convict, and the detective knew him well. "Reddy" now hurried away with the detective close at his heels. He led him to one of the most dangerous localities in the city of New York. Reddy then entered a saloon, and, after a few moments, the detective also entered. The ex-convict made his way to a table where two men were in close conversation. Mr. Fox, now in the disguise of an

all-around ruffian, made his way to a table near them, but they spoke in such low tones that the listening detective did not hear a word they uttered. They were about to go, when "Reddy" said: "Half past twelve to-night, be sure to be there," and then the trio of crooks left the place. "Half-past twelve, be there," laughed the detective to himself; "well, I will be there."

* * * * *

"Hist, here they come," said the detective, in low tones, to his companions, just as a part of the floor of the vault opened, and a head was popped up. "There is no one around, boys," said the owner of the head; "you may come up." One after another the men came up, and they were about to open a drawer when the detective gave the signal, and said: "I'll save you the trouble this time, Mr. 'Reddy,' alias Jim Sommers," and he proceeded to handcuff them. Meanwhile, they were being covered by two grim revolvers, held in the hands of two determined officers.

* * * * *

"So the mystery of the vault is solved," said the president to the detective next morning. "Well, here is the reward I promised," and he continued by taking out a check-book and filling out the blank. "Yes," answered the detective, "it was robbed by 'Reddy'." One of the miscreants, who is a wharf rat, discovered the sewer under the vault, and in this way robbed you; and here is the money he robbed you of, but now I must bid you good-day, for I must attend the trial," and with these words he left. But the president never ceased to be grateful to him for solving the mystery of the vault.

A Mystery of Florida.

(By James King, Cambridge.)

Last summer while in Florida with a friend of mine, we visited an old Indian who was called "Indian Joe."

As he was getting dinner one day we asked him to tell us a story of his adventures. He promised to do so after dinner, so hastily bolting the yams, corn bread and alligator steak, we were ready for the story which "Indian Joe," after lighting his pipe, told in this wise:

"In the year 18—, I and my comrade, Pedro, sat one day before a fire broiling some venison, when I noticed that many shadowy forms began circling around us, and the next instant we were battling for our lives. Strange to say, they hardly molested me, but they soon overpowered Pedro, bound and gagged him, and, without uttering a sound, disappeared in the forest. I followed their trail for about five miles, when, to all appearances, it suddenly ended. I was angry, for I had considered myself a good trailer, woodcraft being one of my first lessons. At last, being unable to find the trail, and as night was fast approaching, I sat down upon a log behind a clump of bushes to rest and gather my scattered thoughts. As I sat there, thoroughly disgusted with myself, I fancied I heard a slight rustle in the bushes. I glanced out and saw a man carefully gliding through the bushes, and, after carefully glancing about, step into the open where he was soon joined by another, probably a companion. They stood in earnest conversation for a few minutes, and in the meantime I was straining every effort to ascertain

what passed between the two, but failed. The only words I could distinguish were 'by bridge of clouds,' and immediately a tremulous whistle sounded, and what appeared to be a cloud arose, on which the men quickly stepped; then they appeared to fade into nothingness, and the clouds rolled away, leaving me rubbing my eyes as if in a dream.

"One day, about a week after this strange occurrence, as I was fishing on a broad bayou, I fancied I heard a scream, followed by a splash. Paddling near the spot, I found, by looking through the rushes, my Pedro lashed to a small raft, while swarming in every direction were hundreds of scaly alligators. I was horrified, and for a moment I was nerveless; but, regaining my will power, I seized the paddle firmly in hand, and, with a powerful sweep of my paddle, sent my frail craft fairly hurling through the water. I approached my comrade with the speed of the wind, but I could already see that I would be too late, for when I was but two-thirds of the way there, one monster, more rapacious than the other, seized him by the arm, and had started for the bottom of the bay, with the others in full pursuit. Pedro saw me, and with an agonizing scream, turned his bloodshot eyes toward me, and sank forever beneath the muddy waters of Tampa Bay.

"Pedro's murderers decamped the next day.

"The bridge of clouds was a huge sheet of canvas, cleverly contrived so that it could roll up or unfold like an immense curtain; thus giving the appearance of a large white cloud when viewed from a distance at night. This explains how I had lost their trail; but the strange part of the mystery was that, the next day, I found my poor Pedro's clothes, his money and his old silver watch. The watch was still going, and his clothes were not cut or torn in any manner. Now, how could this be, when I plainly saw them on his body when he was seized by the alligator? Why was Pedro put to death, and I not even molested? How did the gang disappear so quickly, and who were they? These are the parts of this great mystery that for forty years have remained unsolved. Old Joe has spoken."

Jack the Slugger's Finish.

(By Harry H. Hunter, Boston, Mass.)

Carl Gilbert and his friend, Ray Earls, were talking on a subject very interesting to both.

These two friends were in the neighborhood of sixteen years of age at the time I am writing about. They were inseparable chums, and though often into mischief, were not bad boys.

The subject that occupied their thoughts was the assault of Carl's sister, Edith, some time ago.

Edith was returning from the home of a friend, at about nine o'clock in the evening. On her way home she had to pass through a dark street, but she did not mind, having often passed through there without annoyance.

When she was about halfway through the street, in the darkest place, she was suddenly seized from behind, and thrown to the ground. Too frightened to call out for aid, she lay there helpless, while a pair of rough hands

tore off two valuable rings that she wore, and, without a word, the villain bounded away into the darkness.

As soon as she dared, Edith got up and ran home. Between her sobs, she told her parents what had happened, then fell to the floor in a swoon.

The matter was put in the hands of the police. An investigation followed, but it was of no avail, and the affair was seemingly forgotten.

Carl and Roy had not forgotten, and, as I said before, they were talking the matter over, some three weeks afterward. They both agreed that if they wished the villain brought to justice, they must do it themselves. Finally, they agreed upon a plan, and to meet at Carl's home at seven o'clock that night.

At seven o'clock Roy rang the bell, and Carl, going to the door, took his friend up to his room. There they began to dress themselves in girl's clothes, and, after much laughing and lacing, they presented the appearance of two young ladies, going out for a walk.

Placing loaded revolvers in their dresses, where they could quickly get them, they slipped downstairs and out the back door.

Arriving on the street, they proceeded to the scene of Edith's assault. They passed slowly along the street where the assault took place.

When they were about halfway through, Roy whispered: "See that shadow skulking close to the wall?" Carl said nothing, and the pair walked along. Suddenly a dark form bounded toward the nearest boy.

"Look out, Roy!" cried Carl. Of course, that gave them away. The villain, hearing that, started to run, but Carl was right after him. When about four feet behind him, Carl, who was a good football player, made a headlong dive, and, tackling the man around the legs, brought him to the ground.

Then the ruffian began to fight, and Carl would have fared badly had not Roy run up, and, covering the villain with his revolver, cried: "Keep still there, or I'll blow your head off." This quieted the man, who had no notion of stopping a bullet with his head.

The boys then ordered him to get up, and, with their revolvers in their hands, drove him all the way to the police station.

The slugger was tried, and he confessed to a number of assaults, and was given a heavy sentence to serve.

It is needless to say that the two boys were heroes for some time, and Edith thinks more of Roy than before, and that was not a little.

The Clever Work of a Young Detective.

(By Raymond L. Wilbur, Omaha, Neb.)

While I was visiting in the small town of Clay, in Georgia, I met a young man, William Randall by name, whose detective work probably saved the life of an innocent man. Close by the town lived two men who owned two adjoining farms, on which they raised cotton and tobacco. Their names were Wilke and Griffin. Griffin, it seems, was in the habit of putting his money in a pasteboard box, and burying it under the floor of his shanty. Upon returning home one evening he found that his box had been broken into and that several bills had been taken. Thinking the thief might

have dropped some of the bills in his flight, Griffin went out to search for some sign of the thief. He was rewarded at last by finding a ten-dollar bill that was stuck in some bushes in his neighbor Wilke's yard. Wilke had been seen going up the road in the morning with his fish-pole.

Griffin instituted a search of Wilke's shanty, and in it was found a bunch of keys, one of which fitted the door of Griffin's house. Wilke, on his return, could not find anybody that had seen him fishing, and the men were for lynching him at once, and would have but for the interference of Randall, who first asked to see the ten-dollar bill that was recovered.

"Just what I suspected," he cried; for, upon looking at the bill, the imprint of a row of teeth could be seen, and upon examining Griffin's box it was found that a ground-mole had bitten into the box and taken the money. The money was found in the mole's hole under Wilke's house.

An Unsolved Mystery.

(By Joseph Gorzalez, Tampa, Fla.)

Mr. White was returning from town, and as he turned a bend in the road, somebody in the bushes discharged a double-barrelled shotgun at him. The bullet went right through the back of his buggy and through his body. The horse got frightened, and ran away, and never stopped till he got to his own door. The man's wife came to the door and found him sitting in the buggy unconscious. Her screams aroused the neighborhood, and a doctor was soon brought. Mr. White, before he died, told where he was shot at. The neighbors searched and found a double-barrelled shotgun and a walking-stick in the bushes. They tried to trace the murderer, but on account of the dense growth of palmettoes, they could find no trail, and the mystery has never been solved yet. This happened a couple of years ago.

Two men have been arrested on suspicion, but as nothing could be proved against them, they were released.

Boy's Detective Work.

(By Sam Steinfeld, Brooklyn, N. Y.)

On Wednesday, September 21, 1900, a citizen of Milwaukee was chased on the corner of Stuyvesant and Milwaukee Avenues, by a man with a club, and so he turned around and ran home, nearly scared to death. On the same night, Mr. French was chased in the same place, and he, too, ran away, nearly scared to death.

Two boys, whose names were Frank and George, who were known as boy detectives, decided to solve this.

George told Frank, on Thursday, noontime, that if each should trap his man, to bring him to an old log cabin near the river, at 9 P. M. sharp. And then they parted.

Nine o'clock came, and George pulled his man, bound and gagged, and in a few minutes Frank had another man with him.

It was too dark to distinguish a person's features; so, when George and Mr. Martin came along, Mr. Smith exclaimed: "That's the man." And Mr. Martin said: "Your partner has the criminal in the bushes." When it was found that the men were the criminals the boys were rewarded with \$25.

STORIES OF MYSTERY



ARE you interested in stories of that nature? Do you know any stories with a mystery in them? If you do, write it out and send it to us. In this new Mystery Story Contest we are giving away

FIFTY PRIZES—175 SPLENDID BOOKS

Just look at the list of books for boys given below. They are the very finest stories that money can buy and written by celebrated authors with whom you are all familiar. Do you want to win two or more of these books? **YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN TEN.** Write out any story you know into which the element of mystery enters, and send it in.

FIVE FIRST PRIZES!

The five boys who send in the five best stories will each receive

TEN BOOKS from this list.

The ten boys who send in the next best stories

TEN SECOND PRIZES!

will each receive any FOUR BOOKS they may select in this list.

FIFTEEN THIRD PRIZES!

The fifteen boys who send us the

next best stories will each receive any THREE BOOKS they may select in this list.

TWENTY OTHER PRIZES!

The twenty boys who send in the

next best stories will each receive any TWO BOOKS they may select in this list.

HERE ARE THE DIRECTIONS

This contest will close March 1st. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name. To become a contestant for these prizes, you must cut out the Prize

Contest Coupon printed herewith, fill it out properly and mail it to NICK CARTER WEEKLY, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your story. No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

COUPON

Nick Carter Mystery Story Contest

Name.....

Street and No.....

City or Town.....

State.....

Title of Story.....

This contest will be an interesting one, boys. The "Nick Carter Weekly" has a bigger circulation than any magazine of detective work ever issued. The stories published in this contest will be read by nearly every boy in America.

- 58—Gilbert, the Trapper.....By Captain C. B. Ashley
- 59—The Rajah's Fortress.....By William Murray Graydon
- 60—The Mountain Cave.....By George H. Coomer
- 61—The Erie Train Boy.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 62—How He Won.....By Brooks McCormick
- 63—In the Sunk Lands.....By Walter F. Burns
- 64—The Tour of a Private Car.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 65—That Treasure.....By Frank H. Converse
- 66—A Young Vagabond.....By Z. R. Bennett
- 67—Tom Brown's School Days.....By Thomas Hughes
- 68—Smuggler's Cave.....By Annie Ashmore
- 69—Pirate Island.....By Harry Collingwood
- 70—The New and Amusing History of Sandford and Merton, By F. C. Burnand
- 71—Mark Seaworth's Voyage on the Indian Ocean, By William H. G. Kingston
- 72—The Way to Success; or, Tom Randall.....By Alfred Oldfellow
- 73—The Wolf Boy of China.....By William Dalton
- 74—The Dingo Boys.....By George Manville Fenn
- 75—The Boys in the Forecastle.....By George H. Coomer
- 76—The War Tiger—A Tale of the Conquest of China, By William Dalton
- 77—Perils of the Jungle.....By Edward S. Ellis
- 78—Both Sides of the Continent.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 79—The Rival Battalions.....By Brooks McCormick
- 80—Afloat in the Forest.....By Captain Mayne Reid
- 81—Arthur Helmuth of the H. & N. C. Railway.....By Edward S. Ellis
- 82—The Young Editor.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 83—The Tiger Prince.....By William Dalton
- 84—The Butcher of Cawnpore.....By William Murray Graydon
- 85—Facing Death.....By G. A. Henty
- 86—Catmur's Cave.....By Richard Dowling
- 87—The Five-Hundred-Dollar Check.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 88—My Mysterious Fortune.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 89—Clinton; or, Boy Life in the Country.....By Walter Aimwell
- 90—Out on the Pampas.....By G. A. Henty
- 91—The Crusoes of Gulara.....By Louis Bousсенard
- 92—Specter Gold.....By Heaton Hill
- 93—A New York Boy.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 94—Oscar; or, The Boy Who Had His Own Way.....By Walter Aimwell
- 95—By Sheer Pluck.....By G. A. Henty
- 96—An Unprovoked Mutiny.....By James Otis
- 97—The Giant Islanders.....By Brooks McCormick
- 98—The Grand Chaco.....By George Manville Fenn
- 99—The Cruise of the Restless; or, On Inland Waterways, By James Otis
- 100—Maori and Settler.....By G. A. Henty
- 101—The Lona Ranch.....By Captain Mayne Reid
- 102—Clearing His Name.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 103—The Adventures of Rex Staunton.....By Mary A. Denison
- 104—Heir to a Million.....By Frank H. Converse
- 105—The Young Actor.....By Gayle Winterton
- 106—The Boy Knight.....By G. A. Henty
- 107—Van; or, In Search of an Unknown Race.....By Frank H. Converse
- 108—Texar's Revenge.....By Jules Verne
- 109—A Dash to the Pole.....By Herbert D. Ward
- 110—Around the World in Eighty Days.....By Jules Verne
- 111—The Midshipman, Marmaduke Merry.....By Wm. H. G. Kingston
- 112—Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.....By Jules Verne
- 113—The Bravest of the Brave.....By G. A. Henty
- 114—The Old Man of the Mountains.....By Geo. H. Coomer
- 115—Adventures of an Athlete.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 116—Happy-Go-Lucky Jack.....By Frank H. Converse
- 117—James Braithwaite, the Supercargo.....By William H. G. Kingston
- 118—Ned Newton; or, The Fortunes of a New York Bootblack, By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 119—A Final Reckoning.....By G. A. Henty
- 120—In the Wilds of New Mexico.....By G. Manville Fenn
- 121—Peter Trawl.....By Wm. H. G. Kingston
- 122—Tom Brace.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 123—The Giraffe Hunters.....By Capt. Mayne Reid
- 124—St. George for England.....By G. A. Henty

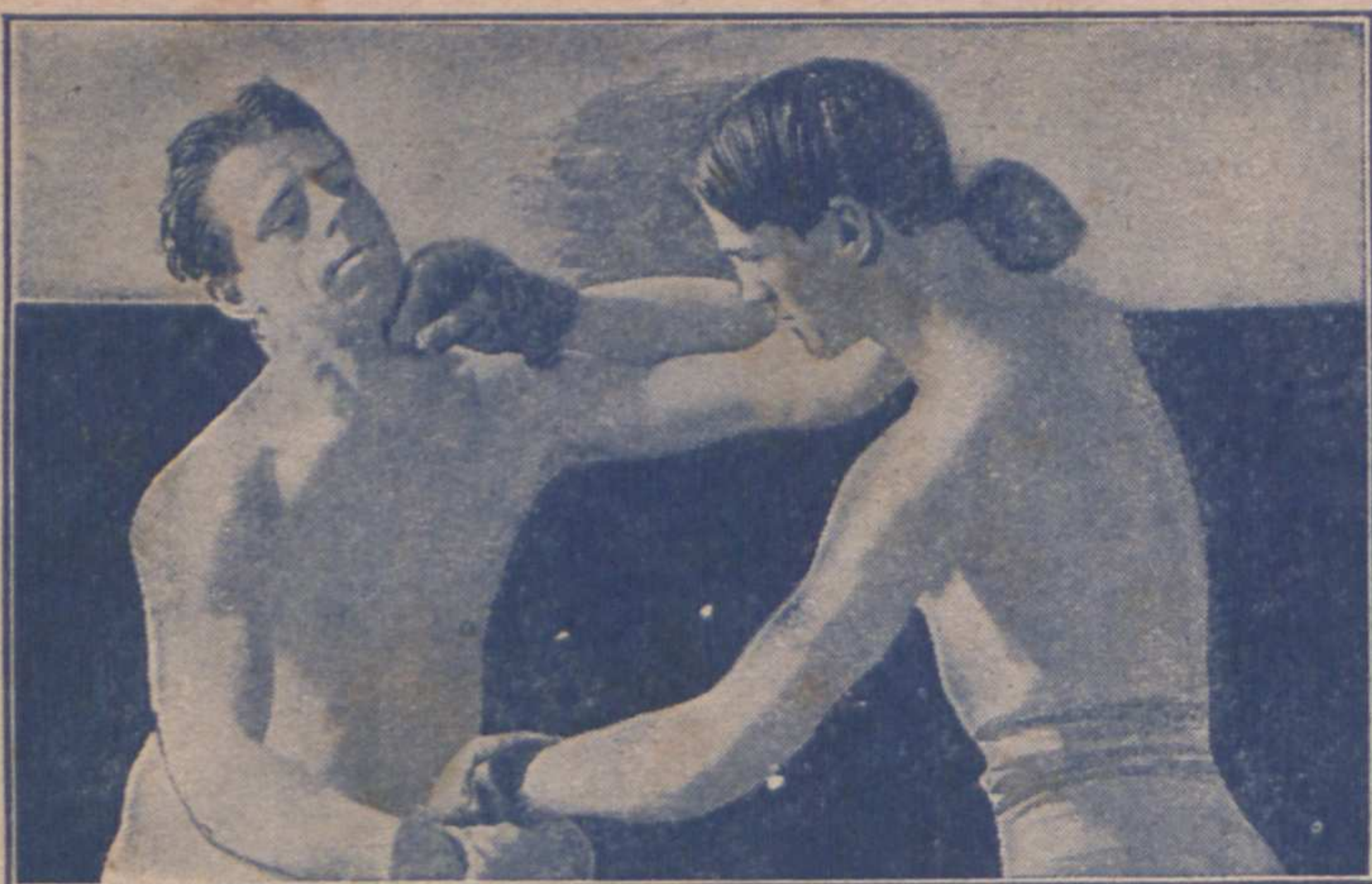
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

- 285—Nick Carter's Chinese Puzzle; or, Patsy's Little Game.
- 286—Nick Carter's Pullman Flot; or, Following a Chance Clew.
- 287—Nick Carter's Wedding Gift; or, Landing an Old Offender.
- 288—Nick Carter's Expert Exposure; or, Downing the Freight Thieves.
- 289—Nick Carter and the Bank Draft Raiser; or, Catching a Slippery Criminal.
- 290—Nick Carter's Quick Decision; or, A Strange Weapon for a Murderer.
- 291—Nick Carter and the Snake Brooch; or, Making a Startling Discovery.
- 292—Nick Carter's Note of Warning; or, The Murder of the Empress.
- 293—Nick Carter's Ghastly Find; or, Sleuthing in the Dutch Mountains.
- 294—Nick Carter's Handicap; or, Victory Won in a Canter.
- 295—Nick Carter's Palm Clew; or, What Chick Saw Through the Window.
- 296—Nick Carter and the Stranglers; or, The Coin Cuff Button.
- 297—Nick Carter at Mount Vernon; or, The Old Rabbit's Paw.
- 298—Nick Carter's Bath Mystery; or, After a Sleek Pair.
- 299—Nick Carter Among the Peter-Players; or, The Little Knocker-Out.
- 300—Nick Carter's Suspicious Companion; or, Discharged from Custody.
- 301—Nick Carter in Chicago; or, The Crime of the Lake City.
- 302—Nick Carter's Queerest Case; or, A Murder in the Snow.
- 303—Nick Carter's Wonderful Nerve; or, The Little Giant's Task.
- 304—Nick Carter in Baltimore; or, The Conspiracy of the Red League.
- 305—Nick Carter's Clever Decipher; or, The Letters on the Floor.
- 306—Nick Carter's Greatest Peril; or, On the Trail of a Human Fiend.
- 307—Nick Carter's Chase of the Thirteen; or, A Prisoner for Life with the Dead.
- 308—Nick Carter's Asylum Case; or, A Great Crook Outgeneraled.
- 309—Nick Carter's Dog Detective; or, A Race with a Maniac.
- 310—Nick Carter's Mystery of Seven; or, Sleuthing at Ninety Miles an Hour.
- 311—Nick Carter in Mexico City; or, Arrested as a Criminal.
- 312—Nick Carter Among the Hotel Thieves; or, The Great Jewel Robbery.
- 313—Nick Carter's Fourfold Murder; or, Clever Work in Florida.
- 314—Nick Carter's Pipe Line Case; or, Running Down the "Reindeer Rye."
- 315—Nick Carter and the Gold Thieves; or, The Grubstake Mill Conspiracy.
- 316—Nick Carter's Cigarette Clew; or, "Salted" for a Million.
- 317—Nick Carter's Auto-Chase; or, Trailing the Red Spider.
- 318—Nick Carter's Quick Guess; or, Ida Jones and the Jewel Thieves.
- 319—Nick Carter and the Murderess; or, Tracked by a Trail of Blood.
- 320—Nick Carter and the Diamond Star; or, Placing the Guilt Where it Belonged.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, New York.



McGOVERN CROSS-COUNTERS WITH HIS RIGHT.

THERE can be no question about the advantage of being able to box well. When called upon to defend yourself you are always ready and the manly art of boxing if practiced as set forth in the pages of the book entitled "The Art of Boxing and Self Defense" will bring the muscles into play and transform a weak man into a noble specimen of his race. . . .

The Art of Boxing^{and} Self Defense

By PROF. DONOVAN

The only authentic work on Boxing now on the market.

DIAMOND
HAND BOOK
No. 9

THE CONTENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS WILL
INTEREST THE MOST INDIFFERENT PERSON.

DIAMOND
HAND BOOK
No. 9

IT is profusely illustrated with 37 elegant half-tone cuts, showing the different positions and blows. The originals of these illustrations are such noted pugilists as James Jeffries, Robert Fitzsimmons, James J. Corbett, Terry McGovern, Young Corbett, and all the heavy and light-weight fighters who have ever held the championship of their class.

The book is printed on good paper, clear, sharp type and bound in attractive illuminated cover.

PRICE 10 CENTS

ALL NEWSDEALERS

If sent by mail, 3 cents additional for postage.

**STREET & SMITH PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK**



YOUNG CORBETT GETS IN A STRAIGHT LEFT ON McGOVERN'S STOMACH.